

Skeezix and Uncle Walt



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By Frank King

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Skeezix *and* Uncle Walt

By
Frank King



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Skeezix and Uncle Walt

Chapter 1

WALT sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes. That noise certainly must be the alarm clock. What else could it be at this time of the morning? But it didn't sound like the alarm and it could hardly have been the telephone.

"Then it must be the doorbell," groaned Walt as he turned on a light, dragged himself out of bed and pulled on his bathrobe. "Who on earth can want me before daylight in the morning?"

He peeped through the little window in the outside door but could see no one. He cautiously opened it and peered out but there wasn't a soul in sight. He could see by the lamp at the corner that the whole street was deserted. The wheels of the milkman's cart creaked in the frozen snow down another street, but aside from that everything was quiet.

"That's strange. I surely must have been dreaming." And Walt started to close the door and go back to finish his nap. But as he turned a little movement down at his feet attracted his attention and he bent over to investigate. And there on his doorstep what do you think he found? He

could hardly believe his eyes. It was a basket partly covered over with a little blue blanket and from underneath the blanket peeped forth a pair of the brightest eyes that Walt had ever seen. He could make out that much, even in the dim light. He carried the basket into the house, drew down the blue blanket and there on an embroidered pillow lay a real, live, squirming, flesh-and-blood baby, a baby with blue eyes and light hair, what little there was of it, a pretty baby with chubby cheeks and dimples in the backs of its hands.

Now a baby to Walt was an entirely strange being. Many, many years ago he had been one himself, but since that time his experience with them had been sadly lacking. What should he do? He did know that babies were frail creatures and that if he tried to lift this one out of the

basket it would surely fall apart. So that was out of the question.

Then Walt had a bright idea. He would call the Doctor. The Doctor was one to be depended upon, day or night, in case of emergency. And this was certainly a case of emergency. He at least could get the little thing out all in one piece. He might even know what was usually done with babies left on doorsteps like bottles of milk or newspapers.

"Doc! Come quick! Something has happened." That was the message the Doctor got over the phone. He jumped





into a few clothes, picked up his medicine case and rushed over to Walt's. It didn't take him long to get there but on the way he had time to wonder whether Walt had broken a couple of legs, had strained his back or had swallowed some furniture polish, thinking it was cough syrup.

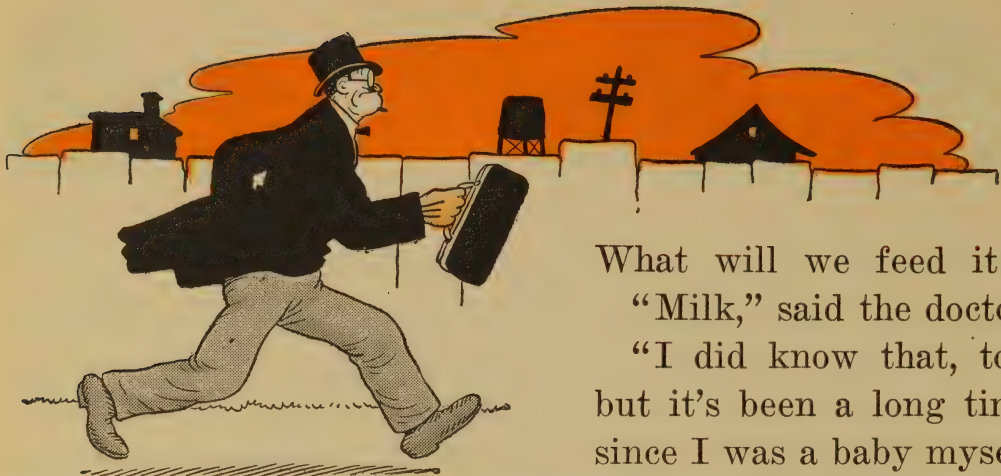
Nobody could be more surprised than the doctor when he found what had happened. But surprising things are always happening to doctors, so he calmly took off his coat and looked down at the basket as if babies were left on doorsteps every day in the year.

"Excellent biologic specimen," he said as he touched the little cheeks and chin. Then to Walt's wonder he lifted the little thing out of the basket as if it had been a doll or a bundle of clothes. And it came out all in one piece! "The first thing to do is to arrange for something to eat," and the doctor turned it over and began to remove the long lacy little dress and the soft undergarments.

"That's right," said Walt as he looked inside and



outside and on the bottom of the basket. "What do they eat? I don't see any directions for feeding anywhere.



What will we feed it?"

"Milk," said the doctor.

"I did know that, too, but it's been a long time since I was a baby myself

and I have forgotten a lot about them," and Walt went to the kitchen door to see if the milkman had been there.

The doctor examined the pink, plump little body from top of head to tip of toe. Then he got out his stethoscope, which, you know, is the thing he puts in his ears to listen to your heart and your breathing.

"Perfect," he said. "He's bright as a new dollar and handsome besides. Walt, you're lucky."

"Perfect? Are you sure? No one would leave a baby on a doorstep unless there was something wrong with it."

"They did this time," announced the doctor.

"What are we going to do with him, Doc?" asked Walt.

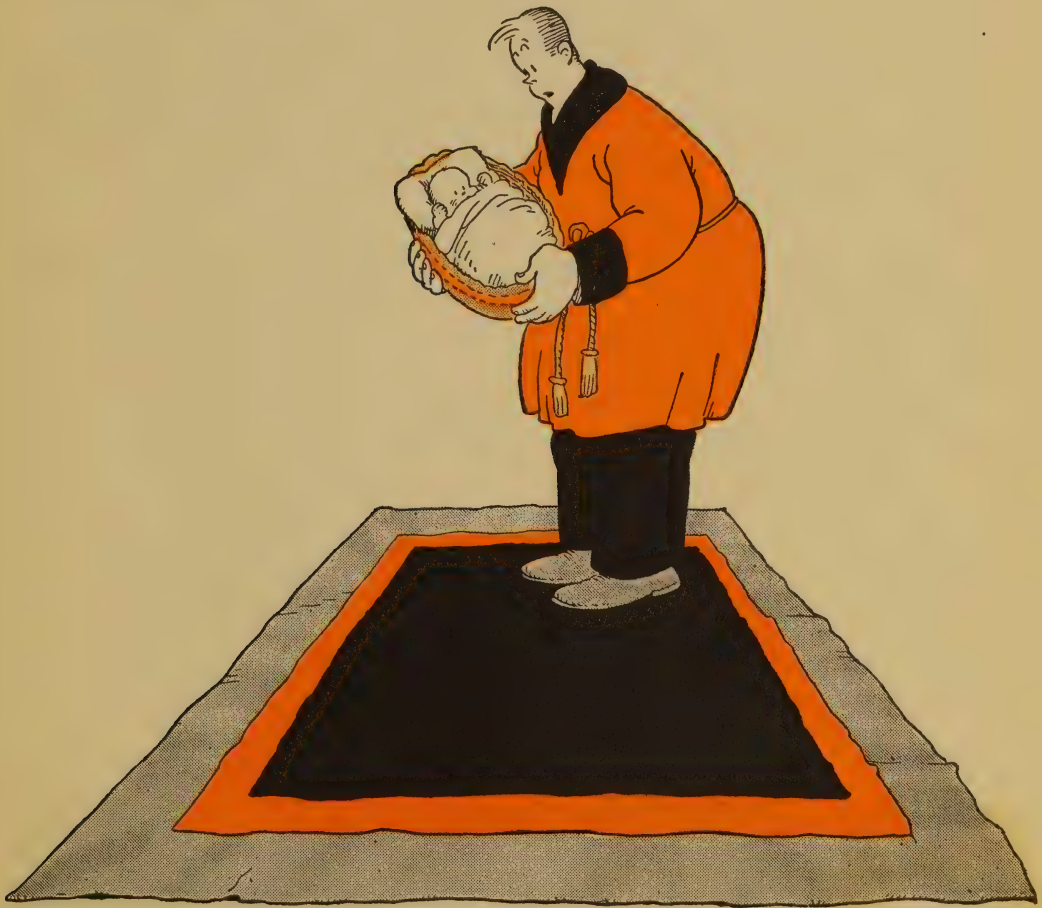
"That isn't the question," said the doctor. "The question is, what are *you* going to do with him?"

Then Walt was told how to prepare the baby's milk, to thin it with distilled water, to get something called milk-sugar



to put in it, how to warm it to the right temperature, what bottles and nipples to buy, and a lot of other things it was very hard for him to remember.

“I’m due to make another visit and I would advise you to call Emily, who can give you some pointers. She has brought up one of her own. Good luck to you,” and the doctor picked up his case and left Walt alone with the young stranger.

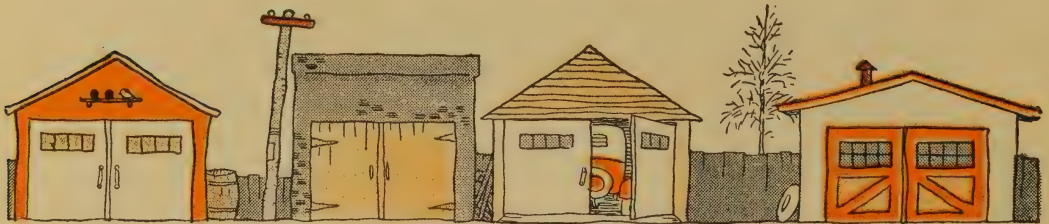


Chapter 2

THE alley at the back of Walt's house was lined with garages in which the neighbors kept their automobiles. It had long been known as Gasoline Alley, and on Sunday mornings these neighbors would gather here to wash and fix their cars. Among these was Avery, a very good friend of Walt's who lived nearby and whose wife Emily had often been kind to Walt.

"You're jollying me," said that lady when Walt phoned her what had happened. "I don't believe a word of it, but I'll be right over this minute."

Emily was more surprised than the doctor had been, but to Walt's relief she took charge at once. "I still have some of Elmer's baby clothes which you had just as well use as not. And you must make a little nest for him to sleep in—a clothes basket will be all right until you get something better, and I'll bring over some baby blankets and





some soft old linen clothes to wash him with, and, Oh yes, Elmer's little bath tub! It's been up in the attic since he was a year and a half old, but it's still good. Isn't that baby just the darlingest sweetie ever was!"

"She'll need some pajamas or something to sleep in too," said Walt.

"It's a boy, foolish!" said Emily, laughing at Walt's man-like mistake.

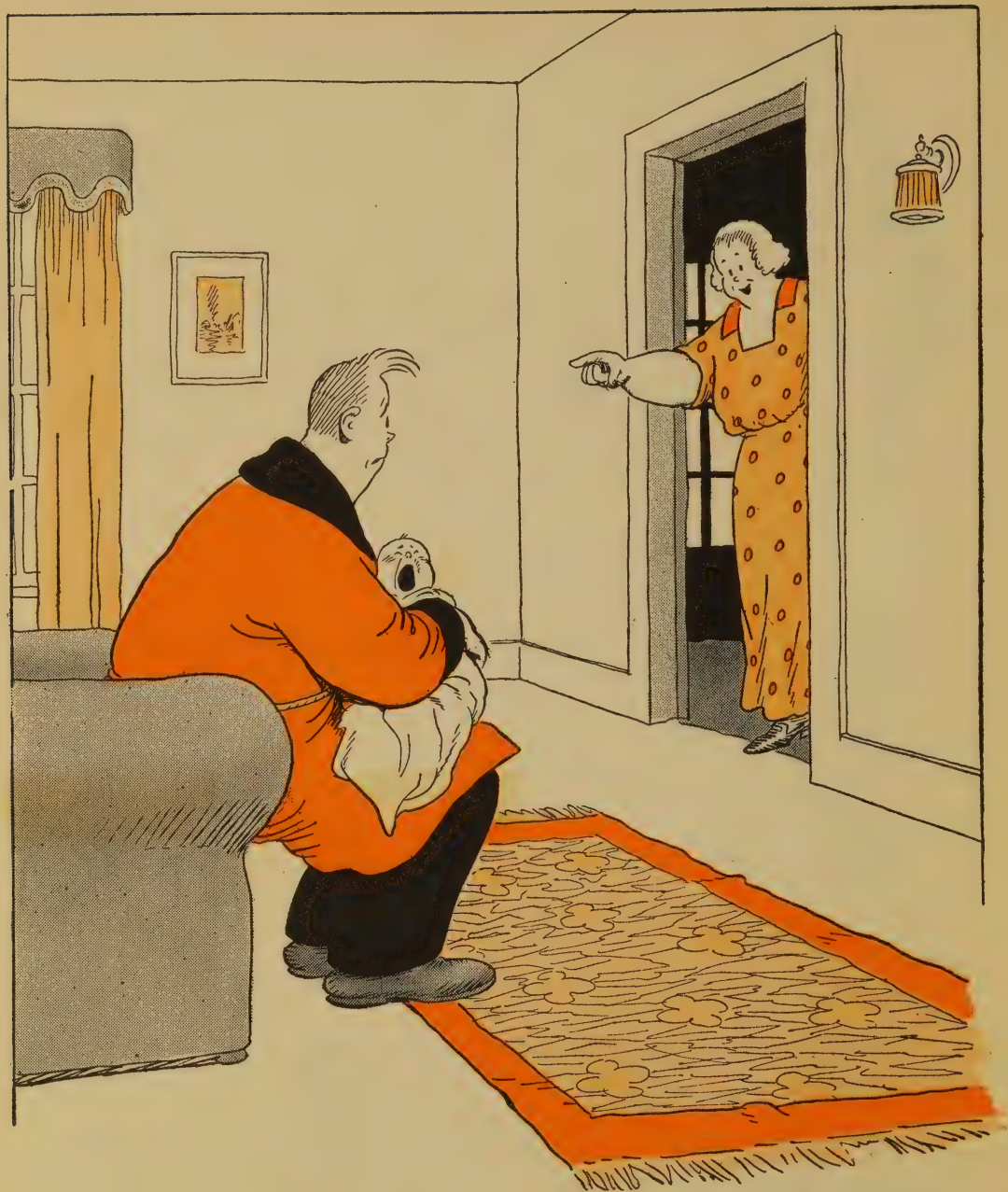
"Hurrray!" said Walt.

Then she showed Walt how to slip his hand down under the baby's back and lift him out of the basket without the slightest harm; how to keep his arm or hand behind baby's head to support it and how to hold the little creature in his arms.

Walt was very awkward at first and rather afraid to try, but when he saw how easily Emily lifted him, turned over and shifted him from one arm to the other, he grew bold and took the little fellow up all by himself. And as it lay



squirming in his arms with its big blue eyes looking up into Walt's gray ones, he had a different feeling than he had



ever had toward a baby in his life before. It seemed as if this little helpless thing was looking to him for protection. Those wide eyes said to him "I'm glad you found me. I know you'll take care of me," and in his heart he knew that he would.

Walt sat holding the little chap in his arms and almost felt that he'd like to sing him to sleep. Perhaps he would have tried it if Emily had not been there. Suddenly the baby puckered up its little face and began to cry. Walt was very frightened and wondered what he could have done to hurt the poor little thing.

"Don't look so scared," said Emily from the kitchen doorway. "I thought it was about time," and she went on with what she was doing.

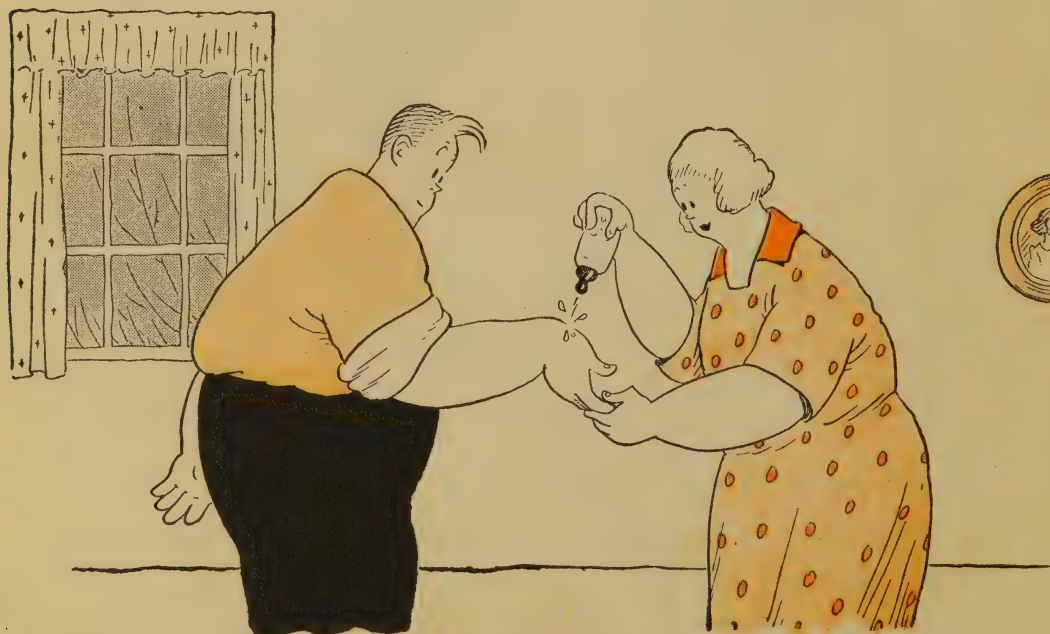
"But something terrible must have happened," called Walt. "He's so good natured when he's all right!"

"You'd cry too if you were as hungry as he is. Don't you worry about him. See, he's stopped already. I'm going



to run over to the drug store a minute and I'll be right back," and before Walt could say a word she was gone.

But no sooner was Walt alone with the baby than that youngster started again to wail and to cry with all the power of his lusty young lungs. What could Walt do? He was more frightened than ever, of course. He walked the floor with the little shrieking armful, he rocked it, he joggled it, and he tried to re-





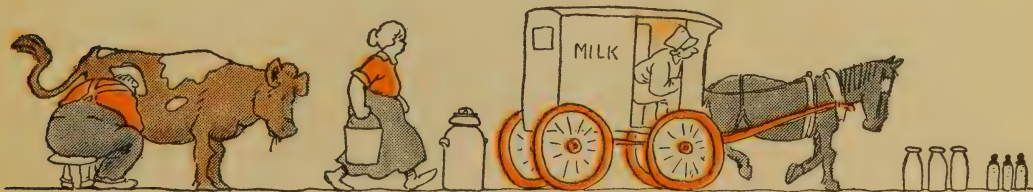
member an old lullaby which had the power to drive away all the troubles of babyhood. But nothing did any good. He knew that Emily

must be wrong. A mere appetite could never make such a fuss. Could it be that this howling, kicking, squirming infant was the same as the sweet calm happy one he held a few moments before? Would Emily never come?

Her step at the back door was a joyful sound to him. But what a heartless woman she was!

"That's fine," she said. "That's the way I like to hear them cry. He's a healthy one, all right," and she laughed at Walt's frightened face. "That's the way they get their exercise. He's taking his daily dozen. Now come here."

Then she showed Walt how to mix milk, water and



milk sugar, put it into one of the bottles which she had bought from the druggist, and place it for a time in hot water to warm it. "And look," she said as she took it out and shook a drop of milk through the nipple onto her wrist. "That's how you tell when it's just warm enough."

"Now give him that and I'll guarantee it will cure what ails him." Surely enough, it did. He settled down without a sound and Walt got his first lesson in handling a baby.



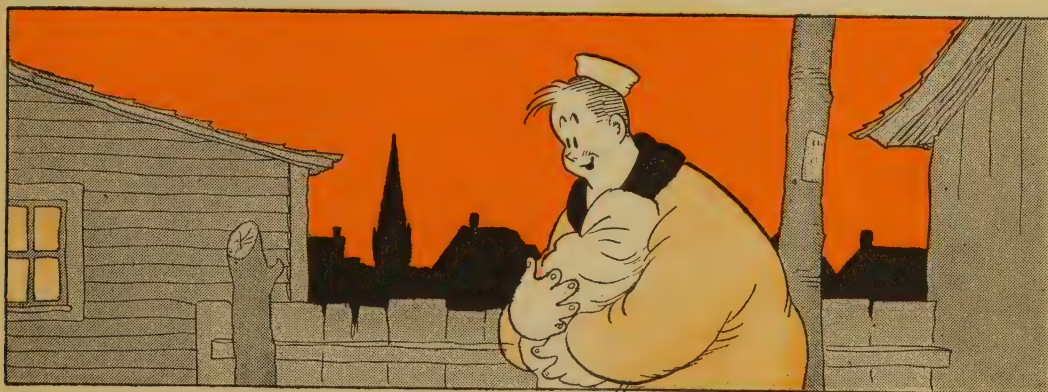
Chapter 3

“**H**E’S all right, Walt, but he’s too young. You ought to take him back and get one old enough to run errands for us,” said Bill.

“He won’t be able to earn a living for you for twenty years yet, Walt,” remarked Doc.

“Why,” said Avery, “I’ll bet he wasn’t three days old when you found him.”

“Three days! Say, he was nine days old and over. He had his eyes open as wide as yours are. I don’t know much about babies, but that’s one point you can’t fool me on,” and Walt proudly shifted the tiny bundle he had been showing the boys in Gasoline Alley.





"How are you going to take care of him? You haven't had any experience," asked one.



"Maybe not, but I've got an instruction book that tells all about it. I'm following it right to the letter."



"Just the same, Walt, you're more used to handling inner tubes than rubber nipples, and you're handier with monkey wrenches than with safety pins."



"Why don't you find out where he came from and take him back?" asked Avery.



"In the first place, I don't know how; and besides I'm getting so I like the little rascal. If we get along like we have so far, I won't want anyone to come along and claim him."



"Yes, but you can't stay around and take care of him all the time. You'll have to get him into an orphan asylum or something."



"I'm going to get a nurse. Ran an ad this morning. I'll bet that's one of 'em at the door now," and Walt hurried back to the house.

Walt had never engaged a nurse before and didn't know just what to say to her. She was large, wore glasses and had a mole on her chin. When the baby saw her he stiffened out and cried.

"I'm sorry," said Walt, "but I'm afraid you won't do. I must have someone who looks all right to the baby."

Several others came that day in answer to the adver-





tisement, but Walt found some fault with all of them.

"Have you had any experience with children?" he asked of a middle aged woman with a squint and a funny little hat.

"Have I? I've had seven of me own."

"Where are they now?"

"All dead."

"Well," said Walt, "you're not just the nurse I'm looking for."

One was rather cross and Walt didn't want that sort of person around the baby. One used slang and of course he didn't want the baby to hear that.



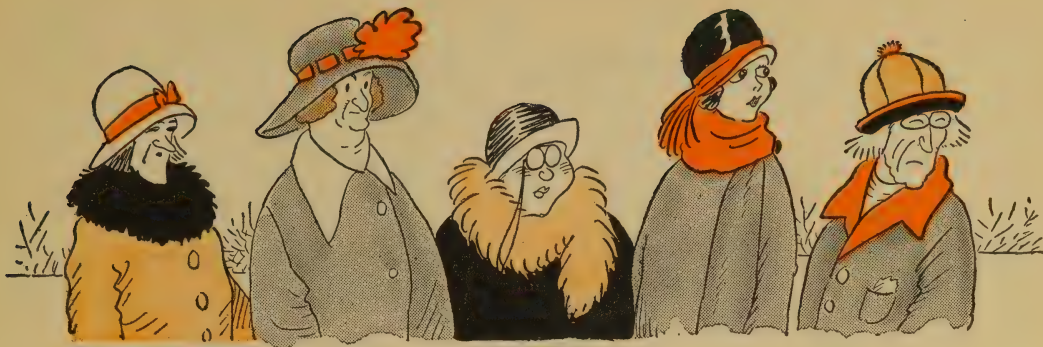
Then along in the afternoon came Rachel. She was fat, colored, and good natured, and Walt liked her right from the start. So did the baby.

"You've handled them before, haven't you?" asked Walt when he saw the skill with which she took charge.

"I've brung up hundreds of 'em," she replied. "What's his name?"

"Well—he hasn't one yet, but I've been trying to think up one for him. I supposed it would be easy, but the little skeezix is causing me a lot of trouble."

"I calls him Skeezix then, till



you gets him a better one, Mista Walt. He got to have a name of some kind."

A wail came from the little fellow and Walt looked at his watch.

"Well, he's three minutes fast or my watch is losing."

Walt hurried to the kitchen to prepare another meal. He showed Rachel where things were kept and how to mix the milk for the baby the way the book said. By the time the food was warmed and ready, a hungry howl was going up and Walt hastened to put a rubber nipple onto the bottle and stick it into the wide stretched mouth. All sound ceased. But

his supper.

suddenly it began again and though Walt tried again and again, he couldn't get the baby to settle down and take



"Lemme see that there bottle," said Rachel, who had been watching the performance. She shook it over her hand,



then got a hatpin which she heated in the gas flame and with it enlarged the hole in the nipple.

"Now try it," she said. "He wasn't gettin' any, that was all."

"Mixture too lean," murmured Walt.

Rachel seemed to fit right in with things and at once relieved Walt of much of the worry he had had on account of the baby. However, Walt had gained some decided ideas in the last few days of how a baby should be brought up. He had a book and three magazines on

the subject and believed in being up to date in all things. He suspected Rachel of being rather old fashioned.

"It says in the book," Walt would say to her, and she would listen carefully while he read to her the latest ways to bathe, feed and dress the baby; about fresh air and sleep; regular hours and regular habits.

"Thanks, Mista Walt, I'se glad to hear all about it," Rachel would reply. And later she would say to herself,



"Books is all right to read, but 'sperience is what counts," and she would go ahead and do things the way she thought they ought to be done.

But there were some things Walt insisted on. He made it clear that feedings were to come four hours apart during the day with nothing to eat between meals. SkeeziX was not to be rocked to sleep and he was not to be taken up when he cried unless something was wrong with him. If he just wanted attention he was not to have it.

This last rule was hard on Walt. One evening SkeeziX



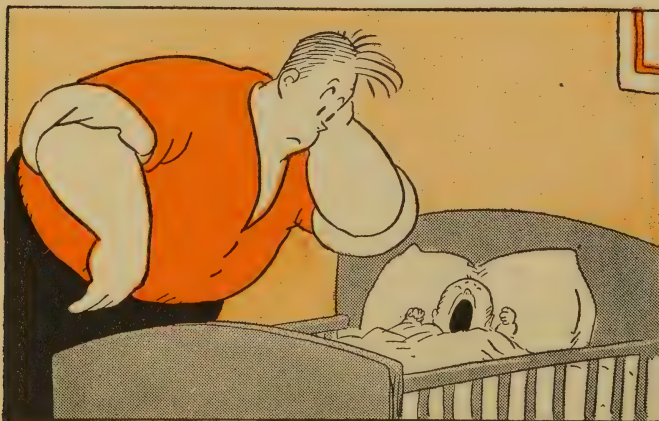
just would not go to sleep. He wanted to play, and when Walt would not take him out of his little bed he began to cry. Rachel wanted to take him up and rock him, but Walt said no. He would get

tired of it in a little while and quiet down and go to sleep. The book said so. But Skeezix cried harder and harder and finally screamed at the top of his lungs.

“Pore lil feller, let Rachel pick him up an’ rock him, the lil honey. He jes’ awful sorrowful, he am.”

“No,” repeated Walt. “If you let him keep it up and get it all out of his system he won’t do it any more. I’m going to see who’s boss around this house.”

But Skeezix didn’t quiet down. His shrill voice went through Walt like a knife. Every sob and every scream



went straight to Walt’s heart, and he felt that he was the meanest man in the world. But he had made up his mind. He got up and paced the floor. I’m afraid if Rachel hadn’t been there Walt

would have weakened, scooped the little fellow to his breast and soothed him to sleep. But he had started something and he felt that he must finish.

Skeezix got redder and redder in the face and his little body twisted and turned with every long drawn cry. Walt began to wonder if he was all right. He wondered if the person who wrote the book knew how hard and how long this baby of his could cry.

He got out the book again. It said he might sit the baby up in bed to be sure that it was not an uneasy stomach that was causing the trouble. Walt tried this and all sound ceased. All the little rascal was doing was begging for attention. It was hard to lay him down again but Walt did it. Then he walked the floor some more and listened to the howls that went up, more heart breaking than before.

Rachel said she couldn't stand it—had to go somewhere else, and she left the room. Walt was about ready to give in and rock the little trouble maker in his arms, when the screams became cries, the cries tapered off into sobs, the sobs grew fainter and fewer and Skeezix slipped off into a quiet sleep.

Walt had won his first battle.

"You is jes' the cruellest man or the wisest one I ever see," declared Rachel. "I don't know which."

Chapter 4

WALT sat holding Skee-zix one afternoon, pinching his fat cheeks and admiring his dimpled hands, counting his toes and his fingers.

"Such soft hair you have, ol' top, what there is of it. It's thinner even than mine is."

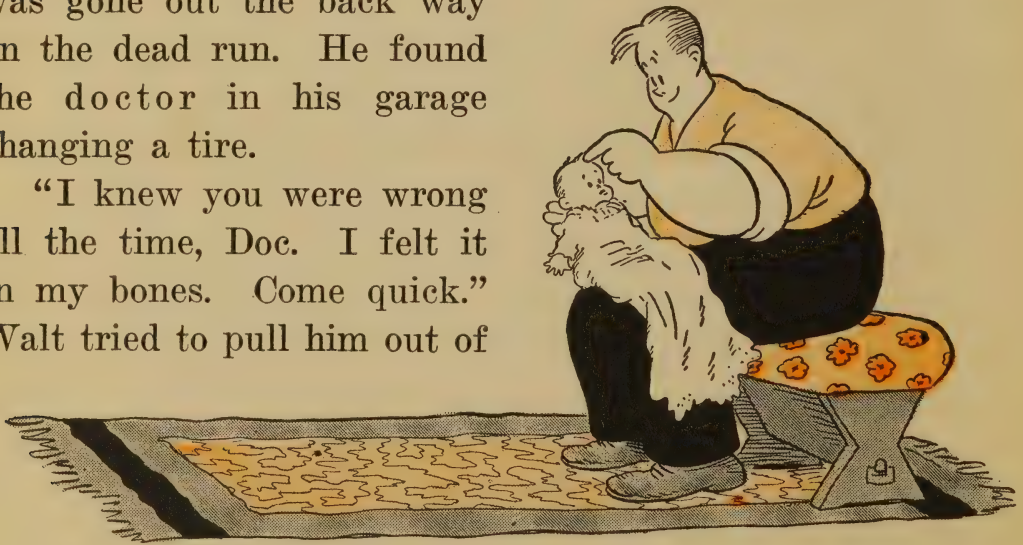
And then Walt made a startling discovery.

"Rachel," he called, "hold this baby and don't you move till I come back. I'm going for the doctor."

"Doctor? What's wrong, Mista Walt? Why don't you telephone?"

"Haven't time," and he was gone out the back way on the dead run. He found the doctor in his garage changing a tire.

"I knew you were wrong all the time, Doc. I felt it in my bones. Come quick." Walt tried to pull him out of



the door, too excited to explain what it was all about.

"Hold on. Why all the rush? What was I so wrong about?"

"Don't stop to wash. There's no time to lose."

But the doctor did take time to rinse his hands under the tap and pull on his black coat.

"I told you folks wouldn't leave a perfectly good baby



without any flaws in him on a stranger's doorstep. I knew something would turn up sooner or later. And it has. It's awful, Doc, perfectly awful," and Walt led the doctor as fast as he could travel back to where he had left Rachel. She stood with a frightened look on her face, not daring to stir.

"What did I tell you," exclaimed Walt. "Feel here. There's a soft place on the top of his head where his skull



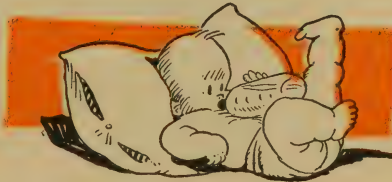


isn't healed over. You can't tell me the person that left him to me didn't know it all the time."

The doctor sank back into a chair and buried his face in his hands. Rachel turned her back and tried to control a violent fit of coughing or sneezing, though it didn't sound just like either one. Then they both burst out laughing. And the more they laughed the madder Walt got. He could have choked them for acting so at such a time.

"You think it's a joke," he said. "Well, it isn't. It's a matter of life and death and there you sit and roar with laughter."

"Don't take it so hard, Walt. They all come that way. That's a flaw they all



have," and the doctor went off into another fit of laughing.

It took Walt

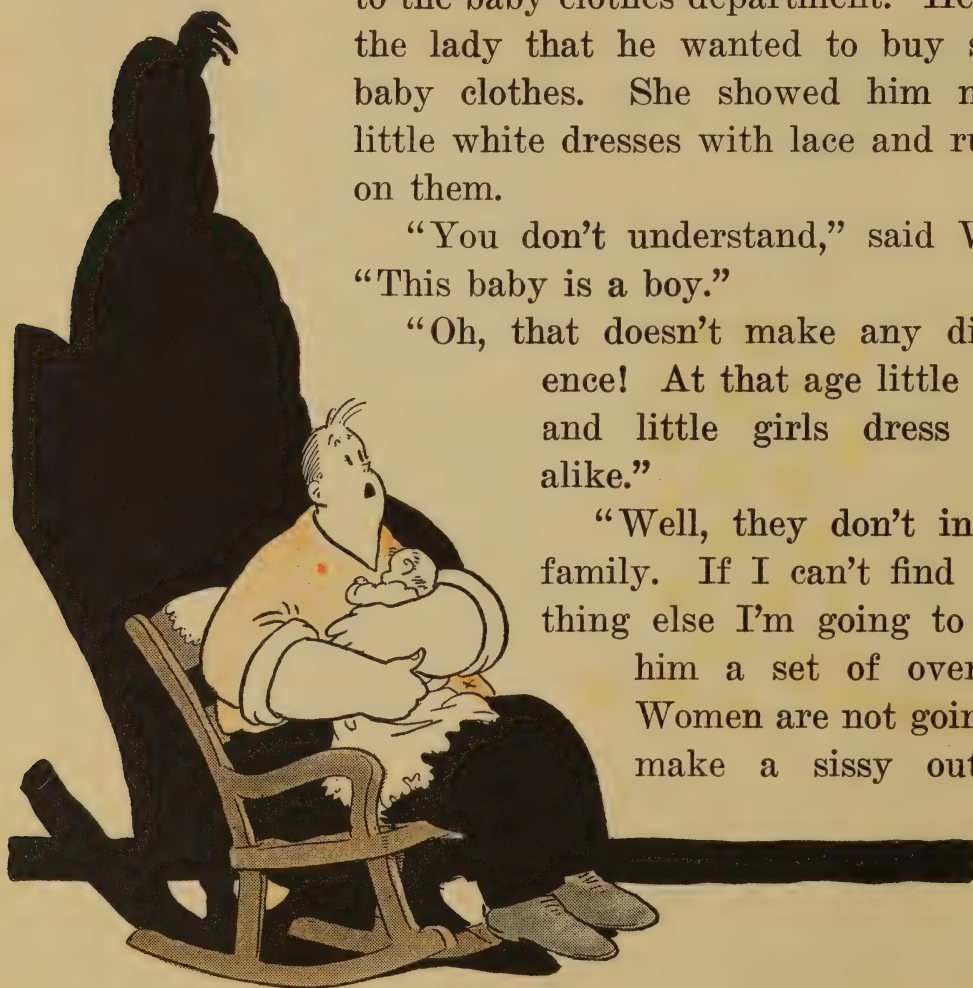
some time to get used to the idea that every baby is born with such a soft spot, but he finally did and now he laughs about it himself.

Walt was learning things right along about a baby that he hadn't suspected. And he did many things that a few weeks before he wouldn't have dreamed of. One day he went into a department store and blushing asked the way to the baby clothes department. He told the lady that he wanted to buy some baby clothes. She showed him many little white dresses with lace and ruffles on them.

"You don't understand," said Walt.
"This baby is a boy."

"Oh, that doesn't make any difference! At that age little boys and little girls dress just alike."

"Well, they don't in my family. If I can't find anything else I'm going to buy him a set of overalls. Women are not going to make a sissy out of





him." And Walt stalked out, furious over the situation.

Rachel went to the movies one evening and Walt did what he had felt like doing for some time but hadn't dared. He knew that Rachel would want to do it every night if she saw him at it just once. And that was to hold Skeeze while he went to sleep. He took the tiny fellow in his arms and hardly breathed, he held him so quietly. This little foundling was growing to mean more to Walt than anything else in the world. Surely, rocking him just a tiny wee bit couldn't



do him any harm. Walt tried it. It seemed sort of comfortable for both of them. He did it again. And then he began to hum and try to remember a lullaby, any lullaby, he had heard in that far off time when he was a child himself. He couldn't quite recall any, and this is as near as he could get:

“Lullaby,
Please don't cry,
Go to sleep
Or tell me why.”

But it was a great joy to Walt to sing and Skee-zix seemed to be willing to listen. When the baby dropped asleep Walt tucked him in his little bed and sat by his side for an hour, though there wasn't any reason for his doing it.

Walt had carefully watched Skee-zix's weight from the first. He had seen that Rachel did it also, though Rachel said she couldn't see any sense in it.

“Why Mista Walt, I weighed him jes' now jes' like you said—before an' after he eats, an' there ain't no difference.”

“No difference? There must be, Rachel.”

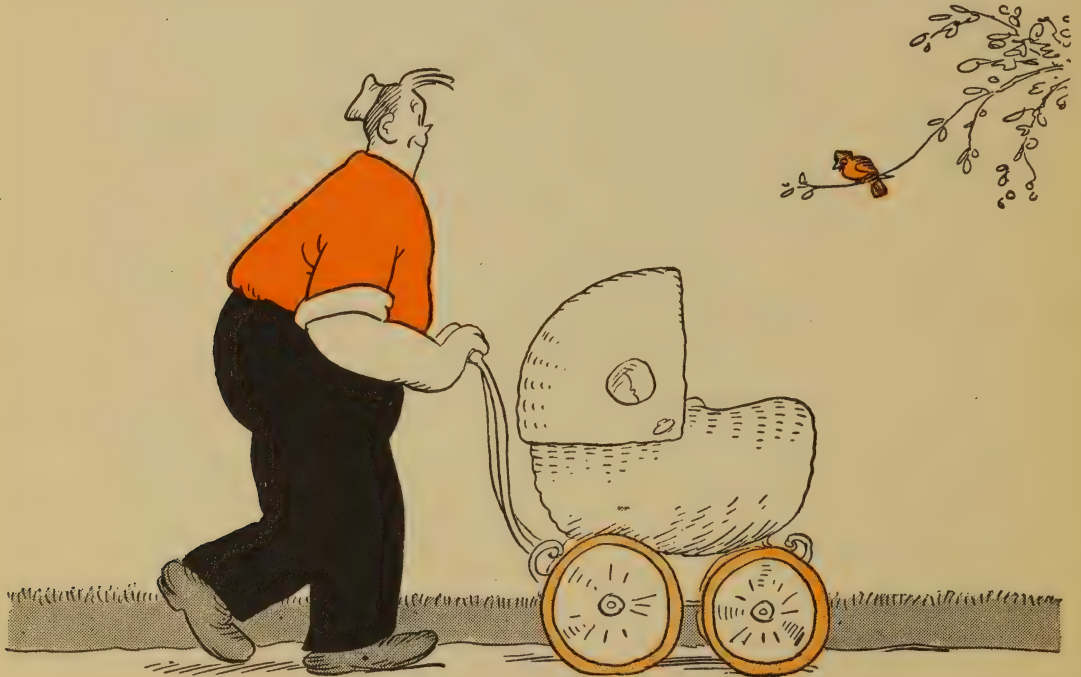
“No sah. I gived him his bottle—plum full—an' put him on the scale an' weighed him then. When he was through an' the bottle was empty he hadn't changed a ounce.”

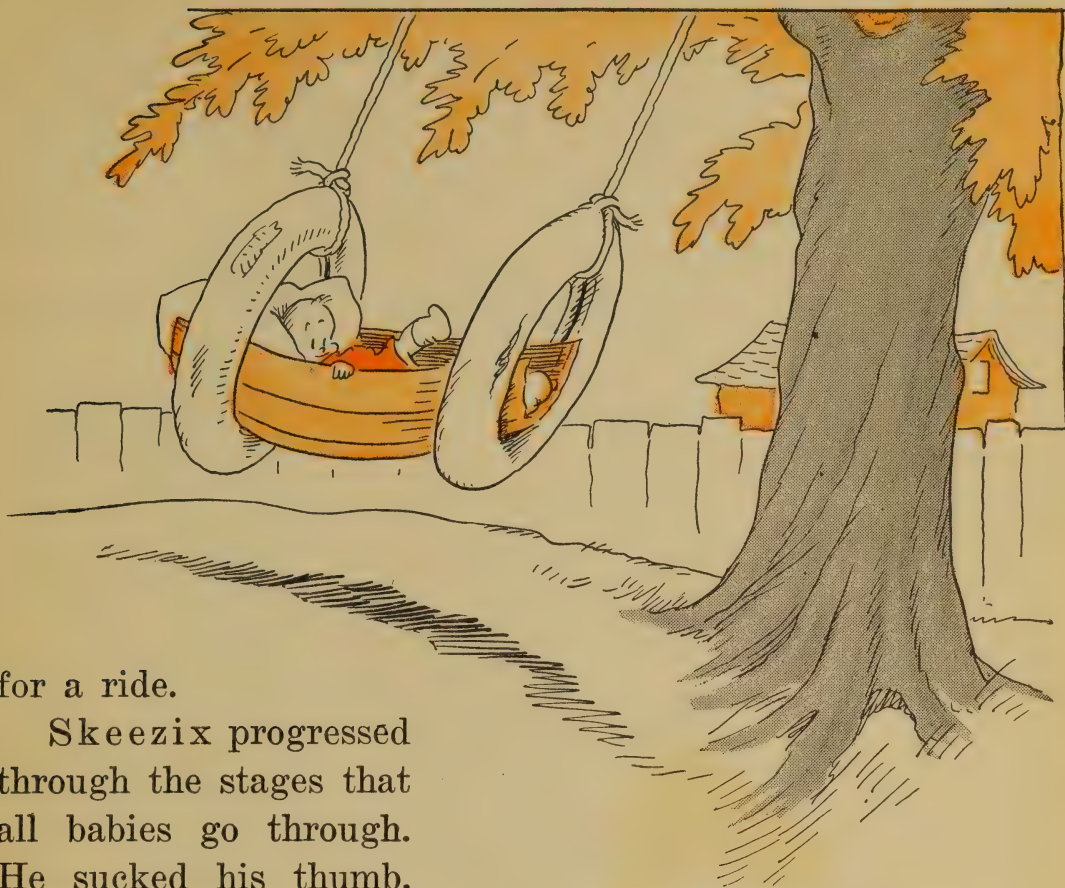
“Well,” said Walt, “next time suppose you weigh him before you hand him the bottle and then again after you have taken it away.”

“As if that would make him gain any faster,” said Rachel, snorting in disgust.

Chapter 5

LIKE all healthy, hearty boys, Skeezix continued to grow. Spring came and then early summer. Walt took him out in his baby carriage and Avery built a swing in the back yard out of part of a barrel and a pair of worn out tires. Skeezix loved this and would lie in it and amuse himself while Walt worked on his car. And then at times Walt would put Skeezix in a basket and they would both go out

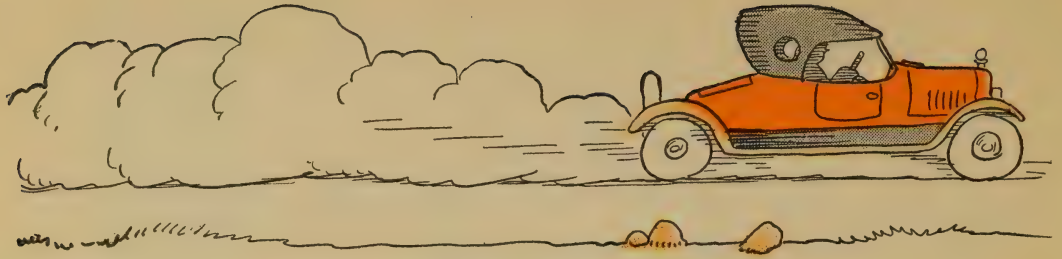




for a ride.

Skeezix progressed through the stages that all babies go through. He sucked his thumb, and Walt tried to break him of the habit. Skeezix played with his toes, smiled, and finally laughed right out. It was a great day for Walt when he did that.

Skeezix had his happy days and his cross days. After he had had several cross ones in a row Rachel told Walt that she suspected Skeezix was going to get a tooth. Walt looked, and sure enough, there was a tiny little one peeping through. Walt became greatly excited and had to take Skeezix up and down the alley to show off this new addi-



tion to his charms. It was days before the joy in this tooth wore off.

Every day Walt got new pleasures from the things Skeezix did.

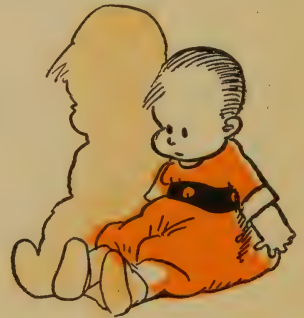
The baby grew stronger day by day and was able to sit up on the floor with pillows about him. Walt would get down on his hands



him in the car out into the country where they could watch the squirrels and butterflies, ramble through the woods, up the hills, and fill their lungs with the clean, clear air. One time when they had done this and wandered far from the car, a sudden summer storm came up and found them without shelter.

A tree kept off most of the rain for a time, but soon the big drops began to

and knees and play with him, and they both would laugh and have a wonderful time. They spent much time out of doors and Walt often took





come through the leaves and there was nothing to be done but hurry as fast as they could back to the car. Walt did his best to protect the helpless little fellow, but try as he would, the rain drenched them both. By the time they got back to the road and Walt had the top up, they were as water soaked as a couple of sponges.

Walt drove back home over the slippery roads as fast as he dared and made record time. He ran his car into the garage, rushed into the house and soon had peeled off all of



Skeezix's waterlogged clothes and wrapped him up in a blanket. Rachel rubbed goose grease on his chest, and though Walt worried for the next twenty-four hours, nothing developed. Skeezix came through it like a duck and Walt had something else to brag about to the Alley Bunch.

But a time came when Walt did have something to worry over. Skeezix developed croup and Walt was greatly frightened. Rachel went for the ipecac, and Walt got the Doctor out of bed and over there in a hurry. They boiled water in the percolator, put a little pan of balsam in the water, and let the fragrant steam come up under a blanket for Skeezix to inhale and ease his troubled breathing.

It was exceedingly trying for Walt, but an experience he was not to miss if he was to bring up a child. The patient came through nicely, however, and Walt began to enjoy life again. But the Alley Bunch were not so joyous, for Walt found no end of pleasure in boasting of Skeezix's stamina and complete recovery.

Chapter 6

ABOUT this time Walt began to think seriously of Skeezix's future. He was to be sent to school and college of course, and then go out into the world and become a great man. Walt had planned this for him from the start, but had not worked out the details to his satisfaction.

"Of course I would be mighty proud of him if he were to become President of the United States, but I am not as foolish as some folks I know who really think that their sons are to have that honor some day. I don't say that he will and I don't say he won't, but I've made up my mind not to

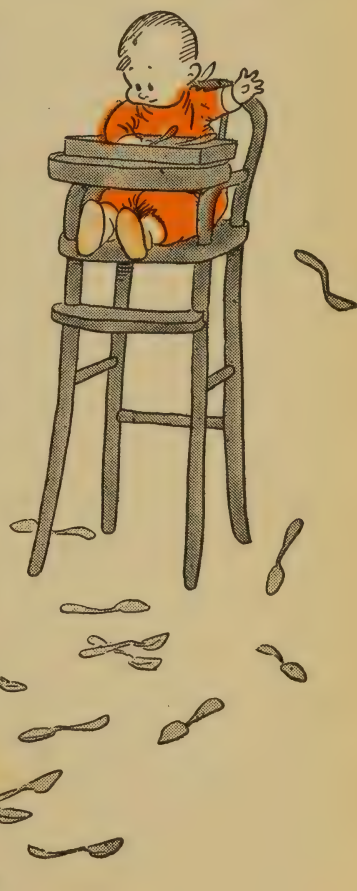


be disappointed if he doesn't," and Walt felt that he had made a very modest statement. He was continually watching the baby for signs which might indicate what Skee-zix would be fitted for when he grew up. One day the little fellow was sitting in his high-chair and had been given a spoon to play with. He dropped it on the floor. Walt picked it up. Skee-zix liked the sound of its falling and threw it down. Then Walt had to pick it up several times, and finally got a whole box of spoons and put them on the high-chair tray. Skee-zix had the time of his life throwing them in all directions, and with his left hand.

"I know," said Walt, "he's going to be a great ball player, a great south-paw pitcher. I can see it in the way he throws those spoons."

At another time Walt almost decided to make an author of him. But he gave up this idea.

"Nobody's read all the books that have already been written," he explained, "so maybe he'll be a grand opera star. He certainly has a marvelous pair of lungs. He al-





ready has vocal power enough to fill a large auditorium. It would be nice to have a speed cop in the family, but if he is going to support me in my old age perhaps he'd better be a movie star or a plumber."

Walt was proud of the cute things Skeezix did—of the little ways he had of showing Walt what a bright wide-awake boy he was. For instance, he would lie on his back, look up into Walt's face, and gurgle. Walt told all the alley bunch about this. Later he got so he could say "da da" when Walt tried to teach him to say Uncle Walt. Then, too, he tried to pull the tail off a toy rooster Emily had given him, and would play for hours with a spool.

One day Walt met an old friend on the street who had never heard very much about Skeezix.

"He's a wonder," said Walt.



"Why, he can almost say Uncle Walt, and does his best to stand up if you only give him the chance and hold him so he can."

"Say, you wait a few months and see how they develop," replied the friend. "Now I've got one a year and twenty-seven days old, never been sick a day in his life, and has kept us up mighty few nights I can tell you! Why, he's the brightest kid you ever saw. He walks all over the house and can say 'Daddy' just as plainly as I can. You'd die laughing to hear him say 'bekkus poo' for breakfast food and 'nupp' for milk. And the way he pulls the scarf off the dresser and drags my old shoes around. He's a scream."

"Mine tried to eat the soap the other day and—"

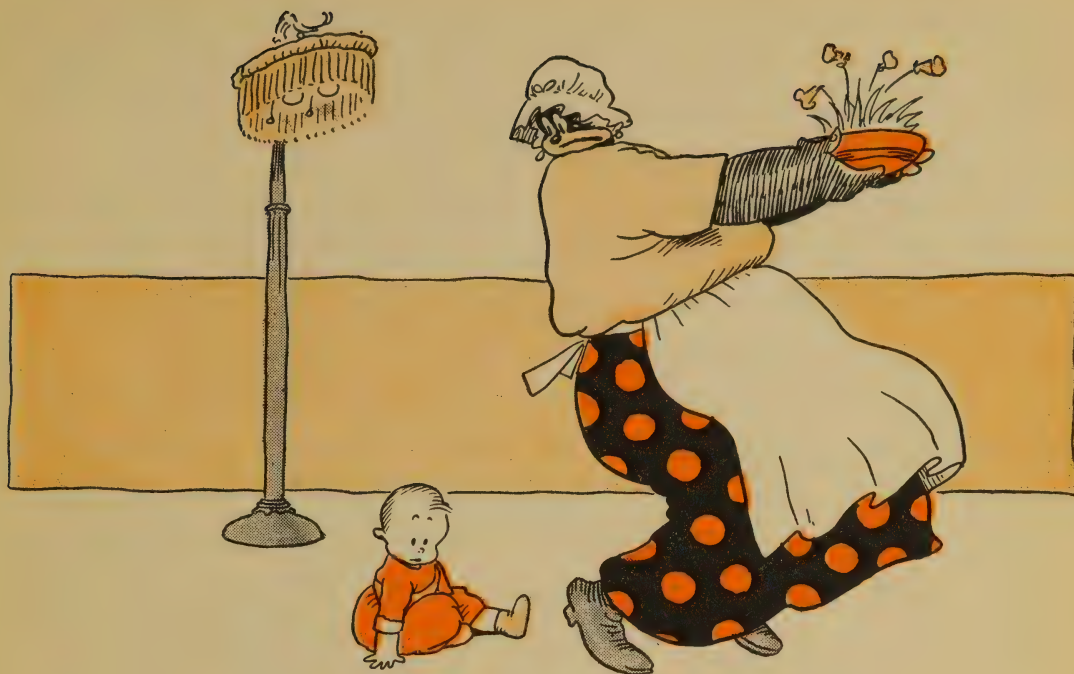
"You ought to see the things mine chews up. He's got teeth as sharp as razors and he put a nick into my finger the other day. He chews his shoes and his doll and his toys—you'd think he he was starving to death. But he certainly stows the food away. And you should hear him make a howl if he don't get it on time. Believe me, he knows! He makes up with some people right away and some he wont have anything to do with."

"That's the way with Skee-zix," said Walt. "Only last Saturday—"

"Yes, but my Wellington—he's named Wellington after his grandfather on his mother's side—my Wellington looks at pictures and just loves to hear nursery rhymes







recited to him. And I think he's going to be musical, too, because you can't get him away from the phonograph when there's a jazz record being played. I put a piece of paper on a comb and make a noise through it and he loves it."

"Skeezix is big and husky for his age. I weighed him this morning and what do you think—"

"Listen. Wellington is two pounds above normal, and it isn't fat either. It's muscle. He's strong as a little cub bear. I can't help noticing it after seeing other children."

"If there's anything I can't stand," said Walt to himself after his friend had gone on up the street, "it's a man who wants to talk about his kid all the time. That's a wonderful baby he's got if you take his word for it. If I wanted

to brag I could tell him a lot of things about Skee-zix—but what's the use? You sort of feel sorry for a fellow like that who thinks his youngster is the finest in the world when you know very well he isn't."

Skee-zix didn't learn to creep, but he found a way of sitting on the floor and hitching himself along with one hand and one foot which took him where he wanted to go. Walt enjoyed watching him do this, but Rachel didn't like it so well. She found him under her feet most of the time, so they finally got a little fence which formed a small square, and this kept the young wanderer where they wanted him. He amused himself with beads he found along one side, but now that he couldn't go anywhere he kept Rachel busy bringing his toys to him. No matter how many there were in his little yard, there was always a doll or a ball or a rattle outside somewhere which he had to have.

He finally got so he could pull himself up by his arms and stand in the corner. This was another great accomplishment and Walt reported it to everybody he met.

One Sunday morning when the fence was folded up and put away, Skee-zix was sliding himself around the floor in





the cute little way he had. Suddenly he came before the closet door, which had a full length mirror in it. He looked into the mirror and there was another baby. He went closer and tried to touch the little child who looked so much like himself. When he lifted his hand the other baby did so too. The only part of the other baby he could touch was the other baby's hand—that is, until he found that when he put his nose up toward the other little baby the other little baby also stuck his nose up against Skeezix's.

Walt looked up from his paper in time to see what was going on. He laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks. Then he called Rachel and they both laughed. Later, down in the alley, he told Avery, Bill, and Doc about it, and laughed so hard he could hardly speak. He had them come up to see how really funny it all was. He pulled Skeezix out of the overturned wastebasket and placed him in front of the mirror. Skeezix hitched around and started away. Walt



lifted him up and put him back before the mirror. Skee-zix rolled over and tried to pick one of the flower figures in the rug.

"Here, Skee-zix, look at the other baby," and Walt turned his head toward the reflection in the mirror. Skee-zix paid no attention.

"See! Baby's got rompers just like Skee-zix. Baby's got shoozies just like Skee-zix. Take hold of baby's hand."

But the real baby did not seem to be interested in the other one.

"Kiss the baby," but Skee-zix had found a button on his suit which he had not noticed before and didn't look up.

"I don't see anything so funny about it," said Bill.

"No, I don't get such a big laugh out of that," said Doc.

"Is this what you got us over here to show us?" asked Avery.

"No, but you ought to have seen him the first time. I laughed so hard I nearly fell off my chair. Honestly, fellows, it was rich. You see, he thought it was another baby—" but Walt couldn't even get them to smile. He didn't know that when they got outside they had their laugh at his disappointment in not getting Skee-zix to repeat his act before the looking-glass. And Walt decided he would not call in anyone the next time unless he was sure Skee-zix was going to perform.

Chapter 7

SPRING, summer and fall had passed since Skeezix had been left on Walt's doorstep. Winter was here again. A letter came one December morning and Walt danced around Skeezix and waved it in the air.

"Good news, honey," he cried. "Good news for you and good news for me. Grandma is coming to visit us." He took Skeezix on his lap. "Not your really, truly, grandmother, because we don't know anything about who that is. But this is my mother and she'll be grandmother to you."

Walt met her at the train a few days later and threw his arms around her — bundles, packages, grips, and all.

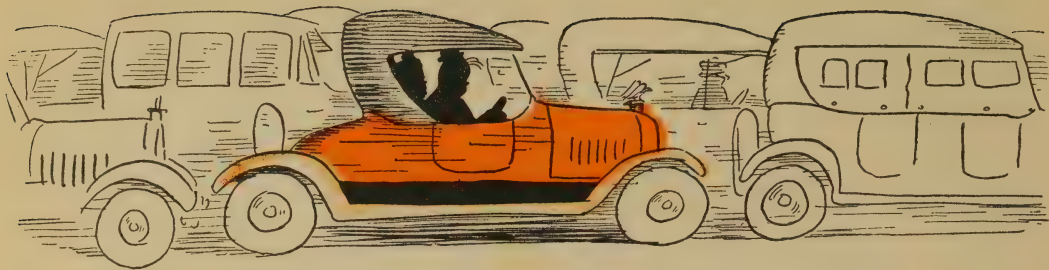
"My, but I'm



glad to see you, Mother. You are looking just wonderful. I could hardly wait for the train to get here. I'll get somebody to carry these grips."

"I don't think you better trust them to anybody, Walter. There are six





tumblers of jelly and a cake in there.” So together they got everything out to Walt’s car and Mother was whisked home in a jiffy.

“You almost take my breath away, Walter, the way you drive,” she said as they pulled up to the curb.

“Why, Mother, I didn’t drive fast.”

“But there are so many cars here in the city. How do you miss them all? Why, I’ve already seen more of them than I’d see on Main street at home in a week. You must be careful, Walter.”

“I don’t do much damage. I don’t hit one in ten.”

Walt looked like Santa Claus as he carried Mother’s baggage up to the house.

“And now,” he said, “you are going to get the treat of your lifetime. This is Skee-zix.”

Grandma—for from then on she was to be Grandma to the boy who Walt had lifted from his doorstep some ten months before—Grandma dropped the things she was carrying and picked up this same big eyed, smiling boy and pressed him to her bosom. Tears came to her eyes. She had been getting letters for months telling her all about him. She



knew what he meant to Walt by this time and now she had him in her own arms. Skee-zix took to her without a second glance. Walt had always said he was a good judge of human nature.

"You sweet and wonderful baby," said Grandma when she could speak. "I have longed to get hold of you, and I've imagined what you looked like, but I don't have to do

it anymore. You're just the loveliest, finest, healthiest baby ever was."

Skeezix snuggled down in her arms and was perfectly content. Grandma and Walt sat down and had a fine visit. He told her about a lot of things which he hadn't written in his letters, and she asked a hundred questions about Skeezix she had wanted to ask for months.

"You have done very well, Walter, to bring him up as you have. And Skeezix, darlin', you are mighty lucky to be left with a person like your Uncle Walt."





Grandma told Walt all the news of the old home town—how the post-office had moved and Main Street had been paved. The old water tower had been condemned and a new one must be built. The Fast Mail came in forty minutes later than it used to and number 56 didn't stop at all any more. Hughey Johnson had a good crop of cranberries this year, Mr. Butts had enlarged his furniture store and Doc Kyle had bought another farm.

Grandma had a way of getting along with people so she and Rachel took to each other from the start. They talked things over and found that their ideas of bringing up children were very much alike. And they smiled over the way Walt insisted on Skeezi being raised just as it said in the book.

"You all done a good job brin'in' up Mista Walt," said

Rachel. "I wonder if he ain't satisfied an' got to do different with his chil'ern. Most of 'em now-days think the ol' folks don't know much about sech things an' got a lot o' newfangled notions. But I aint one o' them that thinks that jes' because it's in a book it's so."

"Walter," said Grandma when she had unpacked her grip, "I brought you something I thought perhaps you'd like to have, now that you've a youngster of your own. It's something I've saved for a great many years," and she pulled out a tiny pair of baby shoes. "These were your first ones and I think more of them, almost, than of anything else I own."

Tears came to Walt's eyes as he took them and turned them over in his hands. Then she told him how he had



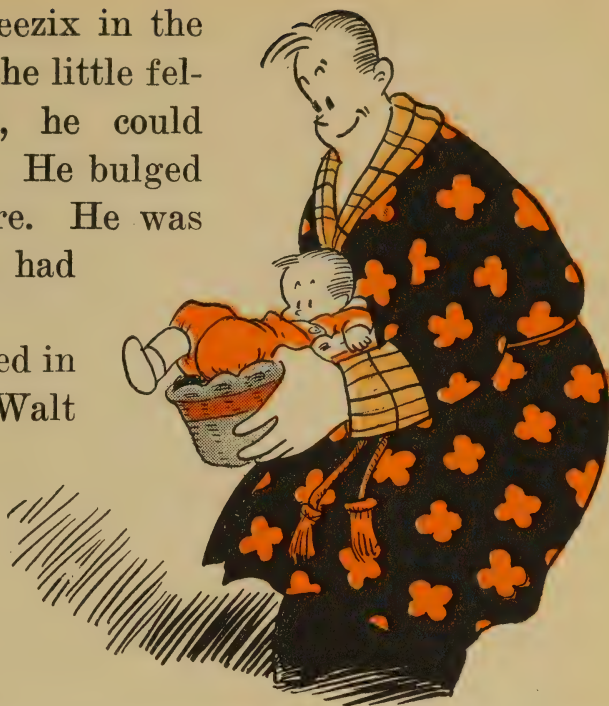
crept about the floor when he was just the size of Skee-zix, how he had swallowed a button and frightened her almost to death, and had tumbled out of his high chair and cut his ear on the stove leg (you can see the scar to this day). Walt brought out the basket Skee-zix came in, also the tiny dress he wore

at the time. He put Skee-zix in the basket and realized how the little fellow had grown. Why, he could hardly get him in at all. He bulged over the sides everywhere. He was like a little butterfly who had outgrown his cocoon.

Grandma was interested in all the details of how Walt found the baby at his front door, but she could not see any more than Walt could why anyone should leave such a wonderful child

on a stranger's front porch. It was enough, however, that he was there with them and was growing up a handsome, happy, healthy boy.

Grandma sat up later that night talking with Walt than she had done for many a week, and went to bed tired and happy.



Chapter 8

CHRISTMAS that year was a wonderful occasion for Walt. With a child in the house there were many things to be done. One of the important ones was to get a Christmas tree. He picked out the finest he could find, brought it home himself on his car, and fixed a box to hold the base of it so it would stand. He and Grandma decorated it with tinsel and tiny electric lights. Then Grandma popped some popcorn and strung it on long threads and hung the white strings over the branches.

“Isn’t it just grand, Mother!” exclaimed Walt as he stepped back to admire their work. “Skeezix will just love it.”

“You didn’t have a Christmas tree when you were his age, Walter. But we hung up your stocking and Santa Claus never forgot to leave a stick of candy, an apple, and





a pair of mittens—like this,” and she brought out a tiny pair which she had knit for Skeeze, made of gray yarn with a red band around the wrist. These were placed on the tree and Walt went to bureau drawers and top closet shelves and came back with many packages which were tied onto or placed under the tree. He had been shopping many times for the little fellow and had had the time of his life picking out Christmas gifts for him and then wrapping them in colored papers.

It was hard to wait for Christmas morning, and when it came the snow was banked against the window panes. Walt was as excited as when he was a boy. Grandma smiled because she could remember the times when he had gotten up at daylight on Christmas morning and slipped down into the parlor to see what Santa Claus had left.

As soon as Skeeze awakened, Walt had him downstairs



and out to the tree. His eyes grew big with wonder as the shades were drawn, and the lights on the branches sparkled and gleamed like stars. He put out his hands to get them, but Walt placed him on the couch and took a green tin horn off the tree and gave it to him. Skeezix was delighted. He pounded it against the floor lamp and found that it made a wonderful noise.

"No, no," said Walt, "not like that. Let me show you." He took the horn and blew upon it and made a fine loud sound. Skeezix listened politely but when he got his hands on it again he was satisfied to bang it against a chair.

"See what else Santa Claus has brought." Walt took a doll off the tree and put it before the baby. He looked at it and went on hammering with his tin horn. Walt tried to give him some building blocks and a wooden duck, but





Skeezix was perfectly satisfied with what he had. Grandma unwrapped a woolly rabbit and a rattle and a toy dog, and a cat, but none of them interested Skeezix. He was having a wonderful time with that horn.

“It’s just the way with them,” remarked Grandma. “They get interested in some little thing and no matter what else you try to give them, that’s all they want or will look at. You were just that way.”

“Oh, come here, Mother!” exclaimed Walt as he looked toward the window and the snow covered roofs beyond.



“You stand right here and look where I point.” Grandma did as she was told. Walt threw his arms around her and before she knew what he was about he had kissed her a big boyish kiss.

“There,” said he. “That’s the penalty for standing underneath the mistletoe,” and he pointed above her head to a cluster of leaves hanging to the electric light fixture.

“Walter, you never will grow up,” she laughed. “At least, I hope not.”

Skeezix enjoyed his Christmas day, but not any more than did Uncle Walt and Grandma. The tin horn finally wore out and a little toy street car took its place. Then he was interested in a colored rubber ball and soon smashed an A B C plate Aunt Emily had sent over to him. He liked a little man who, no matter how often you pushed him over, always stood up again, and he chewed a little leather puppy-dog’s tail nearly off.

There was no end of toys—for Bill, and the Doctor, and

Avery, and their wives, and Rachel, besides Walt and Grandma, had remembered Skeezix on his first Christmas.

“My, I never saw so many toys,” said Grandma.

Skeezix had to take about four dolls and his street car to bed with him and probably dreamed of a trip up into the sky and to Santa Claus’ castle far to the north where the reindeer and the snow fairies and Mrs. Santa Claus were resting.

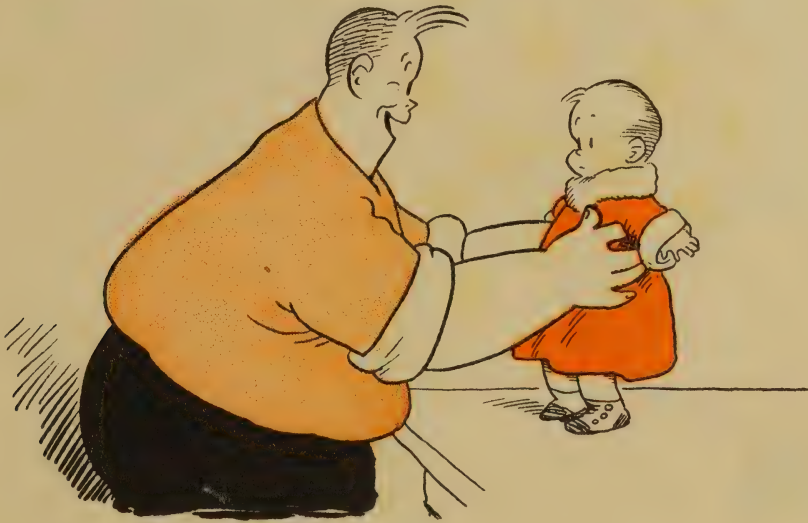


Chapter 9

THE next few weeks were important in Skeeze's life. He grew rapidly and was able to do something new each day. Walt went all over town to buy him a coat and got a year-and-a-half size.

"Just think of it! He's only eleven months old," exclaimed Walt, who was very proud that Skeeze required such a grown-up size.

"He don't know yet," said Rachel to Grandma when Walt was not present, "that they always makes chilluns' clo'es like that so ever'body thinks their chile biggern anybody elses."



When he gits to be two he'll wear three year olds and when he's seven it'll be nine year sizes. Them clo'es makers is smart."

When Skeezix took his first step Walt advertised it to everybody he met. Walt didn't boast very much except where Skeezix was concerned, but he made up for it there. Walt was all puffed up most of the time these days. For instance, Skeezix would say "um da da" which Walt was sure was his attempt at "Uncle Walt."



When Skeezix's first birthday rolled around—or the anniversary of his being left on Walt's doorstep, as Walt didn't know his real birthday—he was able to say "Unk" and could



walk around a chair. He could drink out of a cup instead of a bottle, could eat graham crackers and spinach, and was really quite a young man.

Rachel made him a birthday cake with one candle on it. Skeezix could not eat any of the cake but he tried to eat the candle. Grandma had gone

back home but the Gasoline Alley Bunch made quite an occasion and brought in gifts. A doll that cried when you squeezed it had his favor for a time, but he finally found a button hook behind the radiator and after that none of the presents held any charm for him.



One of the events Walt enjoyed very much was Skeezix's bath. He loved to give it to the little fellow and would laugh through the whole performance.

"Say, you young sea lion, I'm giving you a bath—you're





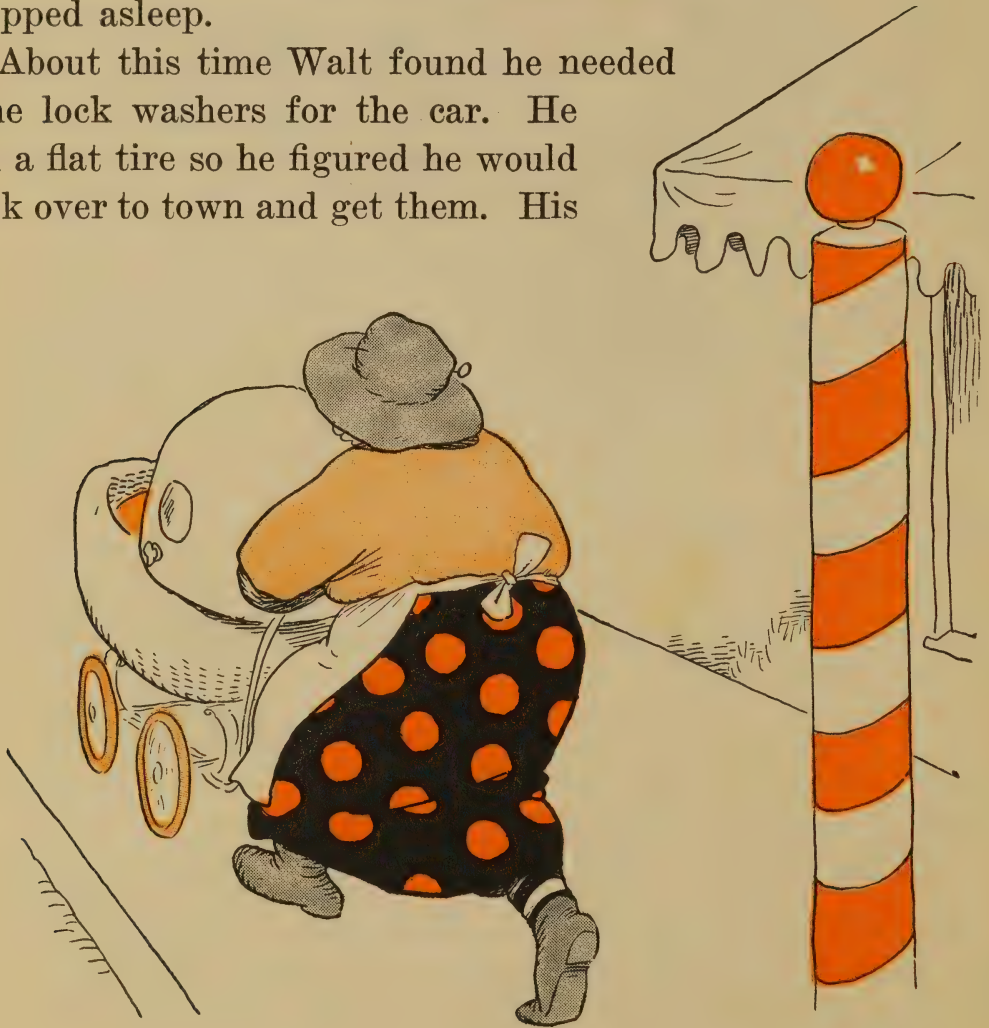
not giving me one," he would say. "I'll make a fish out of you yet. Here comes a big wave! Look out!" Skee-zix loved it as well as Walt did and would splash about as long as Walt would let him.

"There you are—a perfectly good imitation of Kid Neptune rising from the waves," and Walt would wrap the tadpole up in a towel and dry him before the fire.

Spring came on again and on the first bright warm sunny day, Rachel put Skee-zix in his buggy and took him over into the park to enjoy the balmy air and to hear the birds. She found a warm spot and left him and his carriage in the pleas-

ant sunshine at the south of a park building. He played contentedly with a string of spools Rachel had made for him and she wandered off toward the edge of the lagoon and sat down on a bench. She was behind some bushes but could see the baby plainly from where she was. However, the warmth and quiet were too much for her and she soon dropped asleep.

About this time Walt found he needed some lock washers for the car. He had a flat tire so he figured he would walk over to town and get them. His



shortest path lay through the park and when he got into it what should he see but Skee-zix all alone in his carriage, and no Rachel in sight.

“Well if this doesn’t beat all! That woman has gone away and left you all by yourself. It’s an outrage, that’s what it is. I’ll certainly find out what she means by doing a thing like that!” And Walt released the brake and pushed the buggy over toward the hardware store. Near there he saw a striped barber pole.

“I’ve been trying to get a chance at a haircut for a week,” he announced to Skee-zix. “I’ll park you here where I can watch you and go in and get it.”

Rachel’s head finally nodded to one side and struck the



hard back of the seat and she opened her eyes with a startled look. She peeped through the bushes to where she had left Skeezix but no baby carriage was to be seen.

"Lawdy sakes to goodness, he's been kidnapped!" and she ran to where she had left the carriage and looked in all directions. No trace. And there was nobody in sight except two boys who were trying to make a fish net out of a handkerchief and a piece of stick.

"Hey, is you seen a baby buggy an' baby goin' 'long here?" she called as she ran toward them.

"Sure," said the larger one as he hunted through his pocket for a string. "A big fella just wheeled one over that way a few minutes ago," and he pointed toward the business street across the green.

Rachel was puffing like a switch engine as she loped down the street and was all out of breath when she spied the missing child and his carriage.

"Why you little darlin'," she cried, "where has you been?" She whirled the outfit about and started back toward home as fast as her weary legs would travel.

"Who was the naughty man that stole you 'way? Rachel tell Walt jes' soon as she get home an' he call the p'lice."

When Skeezix started on his homeward journey, Walt had his head on one side and was being shorn with the clippers. The barber was between him and the window and was also telling him how his little girl had tipped over the molasses jug the day before.

"When I caught her in it she looked up and said, just

as sober—" But the story of the molasses jug was never finished.

Walt glanced out and saw that the carriage had disappeared. The next moment he was rushing down the street, lather behind his ears and the barber apron streaming from his neck. He finally turned a corner and saw Rachel ahead. She turned, stopped and tried to tell him how somebody had stolen Skeeze from the park.

"Stolen, nothing!" exclaimed Walt. "I took him with me because there was nobody with him. What do you mean by leaving him that way? And what do you mean by scaring me to death by taking him away from the barber shop where I'd left him?"

"Land sakes, you all didn't leave him there, did you, Mista Walt? Jes' like I did over in the park? I thought you-all had better sense."

Walt returned for the finishing touches to his haircut and Rachel took her charge back home.

"Nex' time I takes you out, honeybunch," she said, "I goin' lock your chariot to a lamppost, that's what I goin' do."

Chapter 10

WHEN Skeezix got so he could trot around the house, everything within his reach had to be put away. Walt soon found that the pin cushion on the sewing machine was a great attraction. He just saved the plant on the window sill from being ruined by falling to the floor, and he frequently had to pick up the books which Skeezix pulled out of the bookcase just to see them pile up. Skeezix got hold of the telephone cord and tugged at it until the phone came crash onto the floor. Walt rushed over, picked it up and scolded:

“You little rascal, I have half a notion to take you across my knee and spank you.”

As the receiver was off the hook it suddenly struck Walt that perhaps the operator was listening in so he



put the receiver to his ear and surely enough heard a feminine voice. In an embarrassed tone he said to her:

“Oh—Ah—I beg your pardon—I wasn’t speaking to you, really I wasn’t,” and he blushed a deep red as he put the telephone back and rushed out of the room.

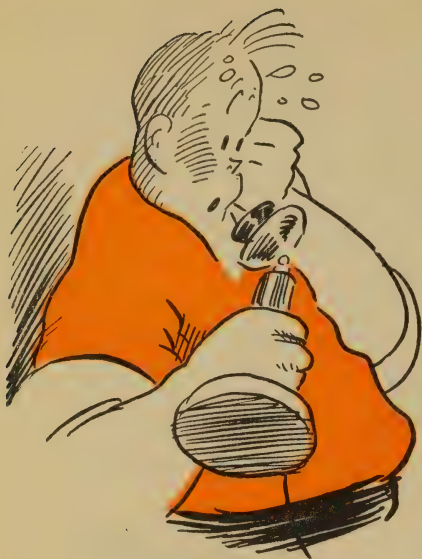
Skeezix got hold of Walt’s fountain pen and with it tried to punch holes in a tan sofa pillow. Walt stopped this, but the next moment the little vandal was tearing up a magazine. Then Skeezix got hold of a black



stick in the fireplace and had a wonderful time with it. When Uncle Walt came into the room Skeezix was playing with the lamp cord, but all along one wall were

a lot of marks that looked like chicken tracks.

“Aha!” remarked Walt. “Looks rather suspicious to me.” He looked at Skeezix’s hands. “Circumstantial evidence seems to be against you. Now let’s try the finger-print test.” He held up the tiny black hand and made a print on the wall



just below one of the others. "Yes, you're the culprit. Now do you know what I'm going to do with you for this? I'm going to take you to the bathroom and wash your hands." It was mighty hard for the big fellow to be stern with the little fellow.

"It's too bad they grow up," mused Walt. "He's just at the cutest age right now. Of course I wouldn't want him to stay as he is and not grow, but I'm sure he'll

soon get past the period when he's so interesting—and then he'll never be the same again."

Walt had forgotten that he had said the same thing when Skeezix was a month old and had said it since. And he didn't know he was to say it many more times as Skeezix got older. He was to learn that a child is always interesting and would get very tiresome if he didn't grow, get older, and develop.

"Walt, don't you think you'd better get busy and make Skeezix your very own?" asked Bill, one of the Alley Bunch, one day when Walt was down in the alley, scraping the mud from the fenders of his car.



“What do you mean—my very own? Isn’t he my very own? I’d like to see anyone try to get him away from me.”

“I mean, legally,” said Bill. “Don’t you think you ought to adopt him? You don’t know who his parents are, and in case they ever show up you’d better have it all down in black and white, I’d say.”

Walt thought it over and finally decided Bill was right. He went to his lawyer to get him to make application to the judge for the adoption of Skeezix. The lawyer asked a lot of questions and wrote down the answers and filled out some papers and went to the clerk of the court and got the case



set for hearing. Finally, after many days, Walt and Skee-zix came before the judge and Walt told the story of Skee-zix from the beginning—how he was left on the doorstep, that his parents were not known, that nothing had been heard from or about them since that time, how Walt had brought him up to be the fine big husky boy he was.

Avery and Bill and Doc and their wives were there, and told how good Walt had been to the baby.

The judge finally signed the decree, and Walt, Skee-zix and the neighbors went home and had a celebration in honor of the event—a big dinner and everything, and Skee-zix sat at the head of the table.



Chapter 11

ABOUT this time there was a new arrival in the alley. She rented a garage, put her car in it and soon got acquainted with the members of the Alley Bunch. The men liked her and were always on hand to help her wash her car or tune up her motor.

Her name was Mrs. Blossom, and Walt was the last one to get acquainted with her. He was a bashful bachelor and always a little slow about such things. Even Skeezix wandered into her garage and got to talking with her before Uncle Walt did. Skeezix made a hit with her from the start and they soon became good friends.



In fact, it was really through Skeezix that Walt became acquainted with her. Skeezix had been making a call, and after he had returned Walt noticed a long tan glove hanging on the fence. He called Skeezix and asked where he got it. Skeezix pointed down the alley and said "Bossom." So poor Walt had to take the glove back to its owner, who happened to be in her garage at the time brushing off the seat in her car.

"I beg your pardon," said Walt, blushing, "but my Skeezix seems to have come away with some of your property. He tells me it belongs to you. My name is Walt, and I have a garage down at the other end of the alley."

"Oh, thank you so much," Mrs. Blossom replied. "My name is Mrs. Blossom. We are neighbors and should know each other. I think Skeezix is a very wonderful person and I hope you will let him come to see me very often."

"Of course I will. I may bring him," and Walt blushed



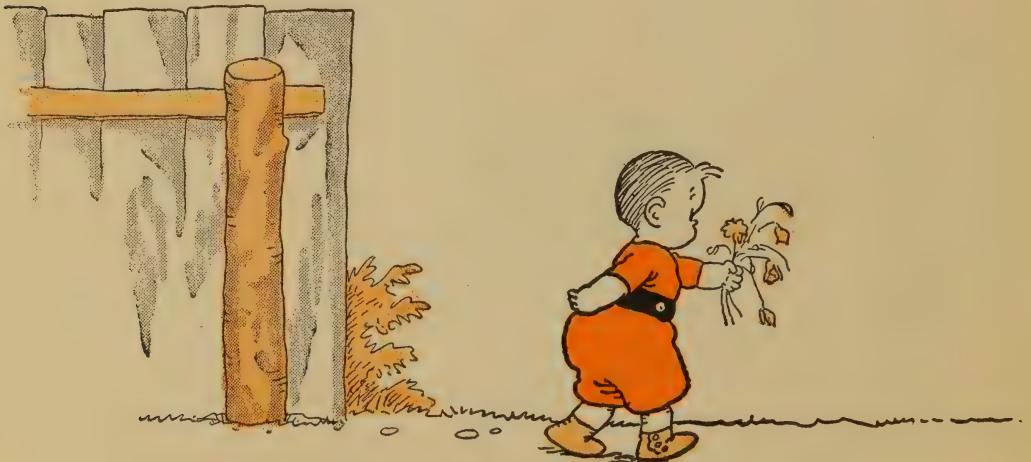


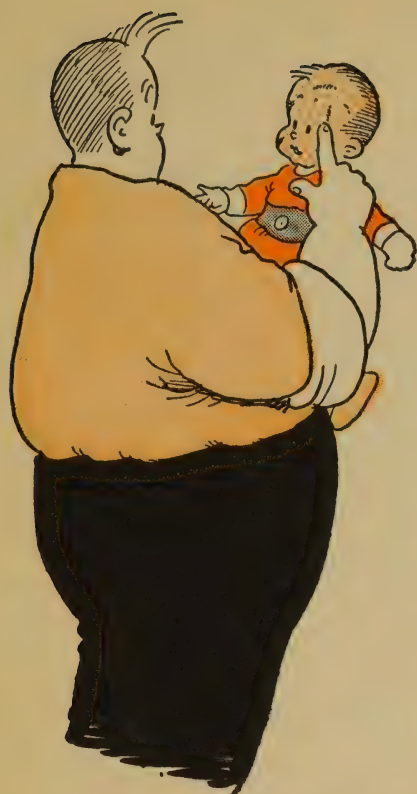
again. "If you don't mind, I'll brush that seat for you. I'm sort of handy around a car and if there's anything you want taken care of, just let me know."

"The men here are all very kind. They have all offered to do things for me. I'm going to have lots of help."

She was good looking and also good natured and Walt was sorry he hadn't come around and introduced himself before.

Shortly after this Walt was working on his car and Skeezix was playing in the alley near him when Rachel came out of the house and threw some old wilted flowers over the fence. Skeezix went over and picked them up. When Walt looked up he was out of sight. Skeezix had gone to Mrs. Blossom's garage and presented them to her. They were a sickly lot of blossoms but she smiled and accepted them as





if they had been freshly picked.

"They are lovely, Skee-zix. Are these from you?"

"Unca Walt," he replied.

Walt never knew what had happened. If he had, he would have been very much embarrassed. However, Mrs. Blossom got a good laugh out of it.

Skee-zix made frequent trips to Mrs. Blossom's garage and was interested in the many things he saw there which he found in none of the other garages. For instance, he had made one visit and Walt, at home, had looked up from his paper to see Skee-zix wandering around with

big red welts on his face—many of them. Jumping up Walt picked the little fellow up in his arms and tried to sympathize with him.

"Why, you poor little honey, where on earth did you get those red bruises on your face? It looks as if you'd been scratched all to pieces in a bramble patch. Are they sore?" He touched one carefully. Then he looked at his finger. The red came off! He tried it again. Same result. "Say, what is this anyway? Those are not welts. Show Unca Walt what it is and how you got it on there."

Skee-zix unclenched a tiny fist and disclosed a little

metal holder with a red piece sticking out at one end. It was some sort of a pencil, or marker, and Skeezix had lined his face in all directions with it.

"What on earth is that?" Walt asked as he examined it closely. "Where did you get it? I never saw anything like it around here before."

"Bossom," replied Skeezix.

"Rachel," said Walt, "do you know what this is?"

"Does I? Don't I use 'em? That's a lip stick. We ladies use 'em to persevere our natural beauty."

Thus Walt got another lesson in feminine needs, and had something else to return to Mrs. Blossom.



Chapter 12

“GO and put your shoes away in the bathroom like a nice boy,” said Walt, giving Skeezix a lesson in order.

Skeezix picked them up and marched away as Walt had told him and put them neatly in the corner of the shower bath. As he started out again the lock on the bathroom door caught his eye and he stopped to examine it. He locked and unlocked it several times. Then he shut the door and locked it from the inside as he had seen Uncle Walt do. He got the



talcum powder and after rubbing it on his face until he looked as if he had been dipped in a flour barrel he began sprinkling it on the floor, walking from one side of the room to the other.

“Skeex pant gass,” he announced. He had often watched Walt working on the lawn and Skeezix was going through the motions he had seen him use to plant grass.

“Let Rachel in, honey,” came a voice from the other side of the door. There was no answer.

“Come on now, unlock the door for Rachel. Rachel got to come in an’ clean up the wash bowl,” Rachel entreated.



Still there was no reply. The young gardener was now busied with planting grass in the bathtub.

“Open up now, quick, or Rachel tell Unca Walt. Uncle Walt spank,” she added.

“No!” said Skee-zix.

“Mista Walt, Skee-zix done locked hissself in the bathroom an’ I can’t get in no way. Maybe you better see what you can do.”

Walt hurried to the door but seemed to get no better results than Rachel.

“Skee-zix, unlock that door and let Unca Walt in this minute! Hear me?”

“No. Rachel say Unca Walt spank.”

Walt pleaded and begged, threatened and promised but

Skeezix was too busy to heed. Finally Walt was really frightened. He didn't know what the little rascal might be getting into. So he rushed downstairs and got the ladder from the basement, went outside and placed it against the bathroom windowsill. Climbing was not easy for Walt, but he finally reached the window and tried to open it. He was sure it wasn't locked but it wouldn't budge. So he had to

get a tire iron from the garage, climb all the way down again, and again make the ascent. This time he forced up the sash and found Skeezix seated on the floor, covered with lather from face to shoes.

"Skeex shave," he said.

Walt finally decided that the reason for all such mischief was the fact that Skeezix had no playmate. He wrote to grandma about it, as he did about most things, and soon there arrived a crate by express addressed to Skeezix.

"Bunny," said that person as he peeped through the top and saw something with fur on it moving around inside.

Walt pried off the top and



took out the cutest little wobbly Airedale puppy you ever saw.

"Here's another addition to the family," he told Rachel.

Skeezix, of course, was delighted. He took the soft warm thing up in his arms and Walt had to warn him to be careful and not hurt it.

"Look, Rachel! Skeex got a wow-wow," he announced.

"Aint that jes' grand," she exclaimed. "What's his name?"

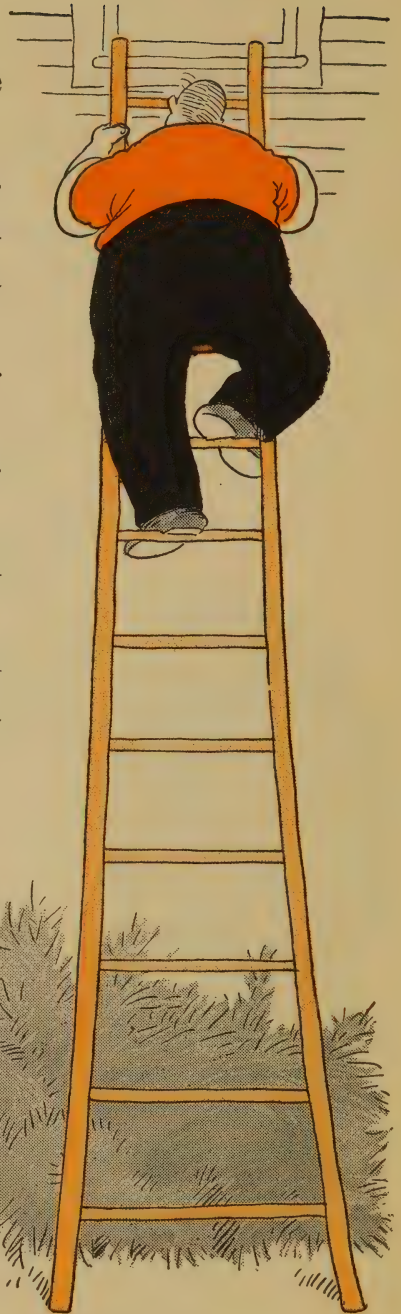
"What's name?" Skeezix asked Walt, puzzled.

"Well, he's going to be a little pal of yours. You better think up a good name for him."

"Pal," announced Skeezix.

And Pal he was from that time on. Rachel got a dish of milk for him and Skeezix poked his nose into it with the instruction, "dink!"

Skeezix wanted to take Pal to bed with him that night and every night for a week,





but Walt finally explained that Pal would be better off in his own little bed under the stove in the kitchen where SkeeziX couldn't roll on him.

Then Pal began to be found in a lot of places he wasn't supposed to be. SkeeziX took him into the shower bath with him one morning and soon after he had been removed from there and dried Walt heard lonesome cries coming from the bedroom. He finally traced them to his bureau drawer, and on opening it found that SkeeziX had parked Pal there.

"Talked back to me," explained SkeeziX.

Rachel found him in the flour cupboard and Walt rescued him from a prison in the victrola, also from a bookshelf and later from on top of the piano. SkeeziX had been forbidden to take him into the shower bath again, so he didn't do that any more. But the next time SkeeziX took a bath



in the tub Walt peeped in to see how he was getting on and found them both—Skeezix and Pal. So Pal had to be lifted out and dried in a Turkish towel, and Skeezix again instructed not to do that any more.

When spring came on again, Skeezix was more than two years old. He had been growing steadily, and Walt, if it were possible, was prouder of him than ever. Pal had grown also, and most of the activities were transferred from inside to out of doors.

Pal was a real chum for Skeezix, and the pair were always together. The pup was mauled and roughly handled from morning till night, but he seemed to like it and thrive on it. He was hitched to tiny carts and tied to trees and almost pulled apart, but he always came back for more.

One night Skeezix had been undressed and Walt had gone upstairs to put him into bed. Then he had kissed him good night about seven times, had tucked the covers about him, had gotten him a drink and kissed each hand, and was about to say good night and leave him when Skeezix pleaded:

“Pal say good night to Skeex.”

So Pal must be brought upstairs.



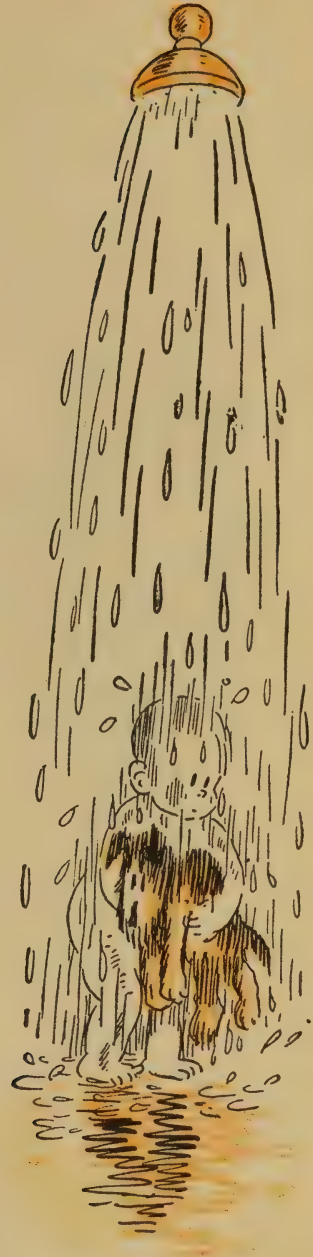
“Pal kiss a foot,” and a tiny foot popped out from under the covers and Pal “kissed” it as was expected of him, wagging his tail meanwhile.

“All right, now go to sleep, you little jack-in-the-box,” ordered Walt.

“Pal kiss nudda foot.”

So Pal had to go to the other side of the bed and caress the neglected member.

“Goo’ night,” said Skee-zix and dropped contentedly off to sleep.





Chapter 13

THERE, there, young man, don't strike poor Pal like that." Uncle Walt rushed over and took Skee-zix in his arms. "Pal doesn't deserve such treatment."

Whereupon Skee-zix began to pound Uncle Walt on the head and chest.

"Great Scott, but you're rough to-day. Isn't Unca Walt good to you?"

"Dow'," yelled Skee-zix. "Wanta get dow'!"

"What's got into you to-day? This isn't like you a bit. You're cross as an old wolf. There are times, I must admit, when I almost wish you had a mother's care."

The next day Skee-zix showed evidence of having a cold. Walt got a handkerchief.

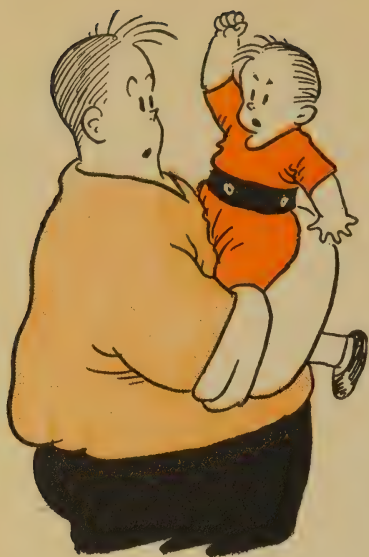
"Now blow," he said. "What's good for a cold? I'll have to look it up in the book and find out the cure."

When he came back Skee-zix had Pal in the corner, a handkerchief to his nose and he was ordering:



"B'ow, Pal, B'ow!"

Another day and the baby was sort of droopy, with dull eyes and no



ambition to romp and play with Pal.

"You poor little fella," consoled Walt. "I know just how you feel. I've been just like that myself. We'll go see Rachel. She knows a lot about what to do for little boys."

He put the little fellow over his shoulder and took him to the kitchen.

"Rachel, Skeeze isn't himself at all. He's got a cold. Do you think it's anything else?"

"I was lookin' at him, Mista Walt.

I think maybe it's a tetch o' the miz'ry.

"What would you suggest doing for it?"

"My mammy knowed jes' what to do. An' I'se handled lots of 'em with the miz'ry myself. I tell you what you do. You jes' soak a piece o' string in coal oil an' tie it aroun' his left ankle an' that miz'ry ain't got a chance. It'll fix him up in no time."

But instead of following this advice Walt called the doctor.

"Drop everything and hurry," he said. "Skeeze has a high fever and needs your attention."

"What is it, Doc—can you bring him out of it in a hurry?" asked Walt when the doctor had looked at the droopy little patient.

"Bring me a spoon," he instructed. Walt obeyed and presently the doctor said:



“As I suspected. Diagnostic signs enable me to predict the appearance of the exanthem within twenty-four hours.”

“Goodness, Doc! Is it as bad as that?”

“In other words, measles,” announced the doctor.

“You don’t say!” exclaimed Walt.

The doctor gave instructions as to what to do, and left Walt with some medicine to be given every four hours. And they were to be quarantined!

Skeezix ran a temperature, but got through the night pretty well.

The next morning Walt heard a rapping on the front door. It was loud and insistent.

“Somebody’s kind of impatient,” and Walt went to open the door and see who was so anxious to be admitted.

"Sorry to disturb you," began the man, "but I come to—"

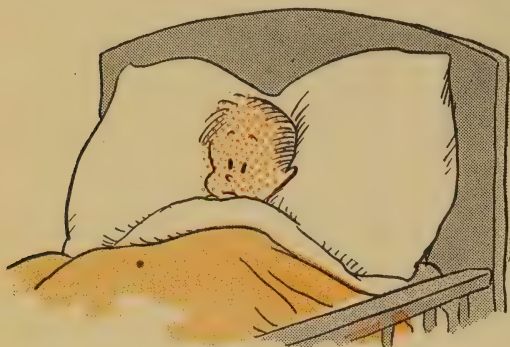
"We don't need anything to-day. There's sickness in the house and I haven't time to argue with you. Come around some other time." Walt closed the door.

The rapping began again.

"Oh, he isn't going to take 'no' for an answer, hey? Well, he can knock all he wants to, I won't let him in."

It wasn't until Walt went to look for the mail that he saw a big red sign on the front door which read, "Measles:

Keep Out!" Then it dawned on him that the rapping he had heard was not because the man wanted to get in and sell him something, but was merely the sound of the tack hammer as the card was being nailed to the door.



"Well, that's one on me,"

he admitted, and even laughed a little at the joke.

As the doctor predicted, spots appeared on Skeezix, and by afternoon he lay on his white pillow, all measled out like a wall paper pattern. He was resting comfortably, however.

Mrs. Blossom walked past and saw the card on the door.

"Measles! It must be Skeezix! Why haven't they told me?" She went up the steps and rang the bell.

"Tell me all about it, Walt. How is Skeezix? What can I do?"

"Nothing, thank you, Mrs. Blossom," Walt said. "Every-

thing is being taken care of. You must go away. We're quarantined and you can't come in."

"Oh, Walt! let me take him right over to my apartment and nurse him back to health. I'll watch over him night and day. I've had experience, you know."

"I'd love to have you take care of him, Phyllis, but I couldn't spare him even now. The doctor is sending a nurse this afternoon."

"A wonderful woman," mused Walt, after she had gone. "She meant it and she'd have done it, too."

That afternoon a large bunch of roses came to the door, "from Phyllis to Skeezix," and the next day a cake, three loaves of bread and some biscuits.

"I baked them myself," she phoned.

"You're a brick!" announced Walt.

The shades were drawn to protect Skeezix's eyes. The nurse was an efficient one, and though Walt was deeply worried, she did a great deal to encourage him.

"Listen," said Walt when the doctor came again. "I want Skeezix to have absolutely the best care it's possible to get anywhere. I have every confidence in the world in you, but if there's any noted specialist you can suggest who might help, I want you to call him."

"I'll think that over, Walt, and if it looks necessary, I'll do it. Leave it to me."

"I don't care what it costs. I'd give everything I've got in the world to have that boy well again right now."

"And yet some people say folks don't care as much for

adopted children as they do for their own,” thought the doctor as he walked down to his waiting car.

When the crisis came, Walt sat all night by the bedside. He talked to Skeezix in a quiet voice—by the hour, almost.

“Skeezix, old pal, you’ve just got to get well. Life wouldn’t be worth living without you. And Unc’a Walt’s going to stay right here by your side until you’re happy and strong again. He isn’t going to leave you. No sir! You’re just everything he’s got and he’s got to have you. There’s just one thing in this world that matters, honey. That’s you!” And so he talked on and on.

When the worst was over, Skeezix began to get better rapidly and when he was able to sit up in bed and smile and look something like himself again, Walt was supremely happy. Walt did everything he could to entertain him—read to him, brought him his toys, told him stories. A great load was off Walt’s heart and he seemed like a different man.



Chapter 14

SKEEZIX grew and developed rapidly during the spring and summer. He talked more and more and became quite a chatter-box. He didn't talk baby talk—Walt had never used it when speaking to him and had not permitted anyone else to do it—but he talked rapidly and ran his words together. It was hard for strangers to understand him, but Walt didn't miss very much of what he said.

“Mans kime uppa tick—come seeum! Eslika mucky mans kime uppa hi tick.”

Skeezix grasped Uncle Walt's hand and led him out of the garage and down the alley and pointed upward. A man was up one of the telephone poles and was pulling the wires which led to a house nearby.

“Eslika mucky mans kime uppa hi tick.”

“Sure enough,” said Walt as he looked up. “‘Just like a monkey the man climbs up a high stick.’ Anyone could understand that.”

Walt and Skeezix were walking at the edge of the park and met little Jean Everett. She was a little smaller and a very little younger than Skeezix, and they saw that she had been crying. She lived just across the street from



where they were, so Walt knew that she wasn't lost.

"Hold on here, young lady, what's wrong this time?" And Walt stooped to comfort the sorrowful little girl. "You look as if you had been having a hard time."

"Sibetta too' ababa nickafo a ikeyso." She looked up at Walt with her big blue eyes.

"You don't say so. Well I don't know what that means but I'm sure it isn't right."

"Sibetta too' ababa nickafo a ikeyso," she said again.

"She say 'Sivetta too' a baba nicka fo a I kee sode.'"

"Plain as day," exclaimed Uncle Walt. "Sylvester took the baby's nickel for an ice cream soda. What could be more clear? You just come along with Uncle Walt and Skee-zix and we'll go over to the drug store and get an ice cream soda anyway."

Skee-zix's bright eyes took in everything about him, and when some men began to dig in a lot near Uncle Walt's garage to build a new garage for someone, Skee-zix was greatly interested. They had driven stakes and stretched a string to show them where to dig a trench for the foundation. Skee-zix loved this string, and the men had a hard time keeping him from breaking it and pulling it off the stakes. He got in their way and threw stones back into the trench. He also coaxed Pal into it and tried to bury him. The men got acquainted with Skee-zix and laughed at him, but he didn't make their work any easier for them.





"Watcha doon?" he asked one of the workmen.

"Oh, we're just building a garage."

"Builda grahge? Wha' for?"

"For a man."

"Watsa man's name?"

"Well, really, I don't know his name."

"Oh!" And for the moment Skee-zix subsided.

When the concrete was put in for the floor, Skee-zix **had** a fine time making mud pies over near the mixer. The men had a hard time keeping him out of their work, and for two days Rachel scolded because he got suit after suit covered with the stuff. When they put on the surface coat of cement, which was to be the smooth floor of the garage, they sent Skee-zix home. In fact, one of the men took him home and asked Rachel to keep him locked up in the yard.

But of course he found a loose board and climbed through the fence. Walt had been around the yard, too, not a week before, fixing up holes that the little fellow might crawl through. Skee-zix showed him three he had missed.

"Unca Walt fix. Skeex no run away," he instructed.

When the workmen came the next morning they found the tracks of little shoes across two sides of their concrete floor. They were angry and went to Walt and told him about it. Walt looked at the tracks. Then he found Skeezix and looked at his shoes. There was cement on them.

So poor Uncle Walt had to pay the men for doing the floor over and covering up the little footprints.

"You keep away from there, you understand?" ordered

Uncle Walt. "You've caused enough trouble for one week."



Skeezix did stay away—for about two days. Then he went down the alley to where the men were working and behind a lumber pile he

found a shiny pail. He took off the cover and inside saw some fine looking things to eat. He took them out one by one and laid them on a board. There were sandwiches, a dill pickle, an apple, a doughnut and a piece of pie. There was a bottle of coffee, too, and while Skeezix was trying to get the cork out of this the cover of the pail fell off the lumber pile where Skeezix had put it and whanged on the ground. One of the men came running, and when he saw what was being done he picked up the food and put it back in the pail and sent Skeezix home flying as fast as he could go.

"And don't you come back here to-day, you little nuisance," the man called after him.

Skeezix didn't, but he did wander back with Pal the day after. The men had forgiven him and he was on good terms with them again. One of them had hidden his lunch behind the stone pile and under his coat, and when Skeezix wandered around that way he saw Pal trying his best to get into it.

"Naughty dog," he said. He caught Pal by the collar and started spanking him.

"Pal goin' to eat uppa lunch, Skeex pankum," he told the workman who ran over to see what all the commotion was about.

"That's a fine boy to take good care of my dinner," said he. "Here," and he reached into the pail and got Skeezix a big red plum.

"What on earth is that you're eating?" Walt asked when Skeezix had gone back to where Walt was soldering up a leak in the radiator.

"Man give Skeex a pum. Pal naughty dog eat uppa man's dinna. Skeex makum top. Man's give Skeex big pum."

"I hope you were polite. What did you say to the man when he gave you the plum?"

"Skeex say 'Skeex bring Pal tomorrow. Get anudda pum.'"



Chapter 15

WHEN the new garage was being finished, Skeezi played with the blocks of wood and the shavings and the sawdust. Auntie Blossom had showed him how to put the ends of shavings under his hat and have long curls. He went around for days looking like a curly haired little girl.

The Alley Bunch had wondered from the start who was to be their new neighbor. They talked it all over, Doc, Bill, Walt, Avery, Mrs. Blossom and the wives. They all got along so well together they didn't want anyone to come along whom they wouldn't like. They were all hoping very hard for just the right kind of person.

The new owner's cars came first—two of them, bright, shiny and new—and driven by a colored chauffeur. My, but they were grand!

"Pretty classy for this Alley," commented Doc. "Avery will have to get a new car now. His old bus will look like a battered tin roof beside these."

"Oh, I don't know," said Avery. "My car is the oldest one in the Alley, but I notice it gets there just as well as any of them."



"It's not so old as you think it is," chimed in Bill. "You've put in so many new parts there isn't any of the original car left. It ought to run."

And then Mr. Wicker came. He was short and jolly, with a happy pair of eyes, a long moustache and an air of being wealthy. Everyone liked him from the start. He gave Avery a can of a new kind of oil—Avery knew what it cost, knew it was expensive—and Avery was his friend from then on. Mr. Wicker passed out good cigars and offered to get Bill into his lodge. Walt introduced him to Mrs. Blossom and he gave her a ride in his sport car, even let her drive it. He gave Skee-zix a piece of candy which that young person promptly ate—all except what was left on his fingers and around his mouth. Pal came along and didn't want to be left out so he began to lick the candy off Skee-zix's face. Mr. Wicker got a fine laugh out of that, but promptly rescued Skee-zix.



Mr. Wicker was soon adopted as one of the Alley Bunch, and a good member he was. Walt was invited up to his apartment one day to see some pictures he had taken out in the mountains. Skee-zix went with him and was much interested in a stuffed duck Mr. Wicker had over the mantle. He was also charmed by a mounted fish which he found in the next

room. He wandered about, and up on the wall he discovered the head of a deer with a fine set of antlers. He looked it all over, then went into the next room to see if there was any more of it there. Running back to Uncle Walt he exclaimed:



"Come quick, Unca Walt, an' see a deer! But his tumnick an' feet are in da wall!"

Skeezix was always welcome when Mr. Wicker was in his garage, and Skeezix often watched to see when he came to open the doors and would trot down the alley to offer his usual greeting:

"Do, Unca Wicka?"

They talked about many things—the duck, the fish, the deer—and Mr. Wicker told him about strange looking animals and bugs he had seen in different parts of the world.

"By the way, Skeezix, you always come alone to see me. Haven't you any brothers and sisters?"

"Yep," replied Skeezix.

"How many?"

"Five."

"How many brothers?"

"Six," Skeezix promptly answered.

"How many sisters?"

"Seb'm."

"A fine family," observed Mr. Wicker with a chuckle.

Skeezix made calls at all the garages on Saturdays and



Sunday mornings when the men were working on their cars.

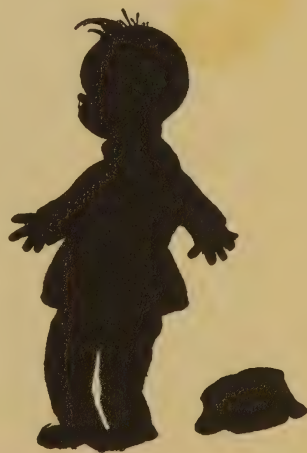
"How's your gizzard?" the Doctor always asked.

"Got no gizzard to-day," SkeeziX would answer.

He started into Avery's garage one day just as Avery was ready to burn out the carbon in his car. The carbon remover had been in the cylinders for some time, loosening and softening up the carbon. As SkeeziX came along Avery started his motor. As you know, the carbon is blown out behind in the form of gritty black smoke. SkeeziX was right in the midst of it when it came out, and before he could get away he was black from head to foot, clothes and all. His face was as dark as if he had been a little colored boy. He started for home on the run, and Walt met him at the gate.

"What do you want, little fellow? And whose boy are you?" Then on closer examination he saw the boy was his own SkeeziX. He never could miss that topknot—even if it was black as soot, and he picked up the little fellow and carried him into the house.

"You sure is a reg'lar lil pickaninny," laughed Rachel when she saw him. "Leastwise, you is from the neck up," she added as she peeled the blackened clothes from him and got him ready for the bathtub. "But you can think up more ways to make Rachel wash clo'es than any youngster I ever see. Howsumever, Rachel rather wash clo'es fer you than any youngster she ever see."



Chapter 16

AND then Puff arrived. She wasn't Puff at first, but just a downy, soft, warm kitten—a present from Grandma. Skeezix named her. He said she was puffy and thought Puff would be a good name.

Pal liked to scare her at first. He would stick his nose down toward her and bark when she raised her back and made a funny noise at him. But he finally got tired of this and after a time the dog and the kitten became good friends.

Puff had to stand for a lot of mauling from Skeezix at first, but like Pal she got used to it and rather liked it.

Uncle Walt enjoyed the kitten, too, and often held both Skeezix and the cat on his lap. Pal would try to climb onto him too. He was just a little jealous of the petting Puff received and would bark sharply at her.

One time Walt went to sit down in his soft easy chair, and Skeezix ran toward him shouting:

“No, no, Unca Walt! No sit down!”

Walt stopped just in time. He looked around and there sat Puff calmly licking her paws.

“No sit ona kitty, Unca Walt.”



“Put that fool cat in the kitchen,” Walt ordered. “That’s the third time to-day I’ve

almost sat on her. I'd flatten her out like a pancake."

Skeezix did as he was told.

Soon there was a commotion in the kitchen. Skeezix ran and peeped through the door.

"Scat!" exclaimed Rachel.

She was helping Puff under the stove with the broom.

"It's a nice kitty, Skeezix, but she all the time gettin' under my feet," explained Rachel.

Later he had Puff under his arm and was passing Mr. Wicker's garage.

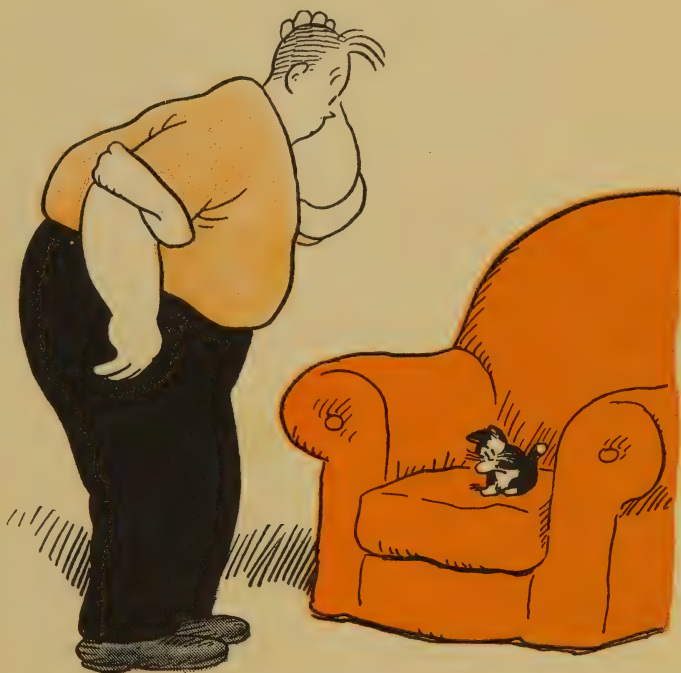
"Hold on there, young man. What have you got there?"

"Kitty," said Skeezix.

"What's its name?"

"Skeex callem Puff, Unca Walt callem foolcat. Rachel callem Scat, Pal callem Woof!"

Walt used to read nursery rhymes to Skeezix, Pal and Puff before Skeezix went to bed. Rachel would sometimes listen in. Skeezix got so he could recite many of the verses himself, but





never got tired of having Unca Walt read the same ones to him over and over again.

“Read me,” he would demand, and Walt would go through the list again from “There was an old woman who lived in a shoe,” to “Higglety Pigglety, my fat hen.”

“Skeex read,” that young person announced one night.

“That’s a good idea,” said Walt. “You read to me.” So Skeezix went to get a book. The telephone directory was the first one he found, so he brought it back and opened it up. He started:

“Jack ’n’ Jill went uppa hill
To getta paila watah
Jack fell down an’ broke a crown
An’ Jill come tumblin’ afta.”

“Very good,” said Walt. “I didn’t know you could read. Try another,” and Walt chuckled to himself.

Skeezix turned over a few pages, to the Johnsons, and began again:

“Hi dill dill,
Catana fill
Cow jump overa moon
Lil dog laugh
See such spork
Dishrunawaywiddaspoon!”

After a time Walt tried some fairy stories on him and found he liked them. And Skeezix liked to hear about the giants and bears and wolves and castles and witches, and would ask many questions about all of them.

Mrs. Blossom was surprised one morning to find Skeezix at her door.

“Come right in,” she said. “I’m awfully glad to see you. How is Puff this morning?”

“Pal eat up kitty,” he said.

“No! You don’t mean it,” cried Phyllis.

“Ya, an’ a wolf eat up Pal.”

“That’s terrible. What did Uncle Walt do?”

“Big bear comed an’ eat up Unca Walt.”

“Mercy! Poor Uncle Walt!”

“Ya, an’ nen a big giant comed an’ eat up Rachel.”

“Oh, I see. Now that everybody has been eaten up,



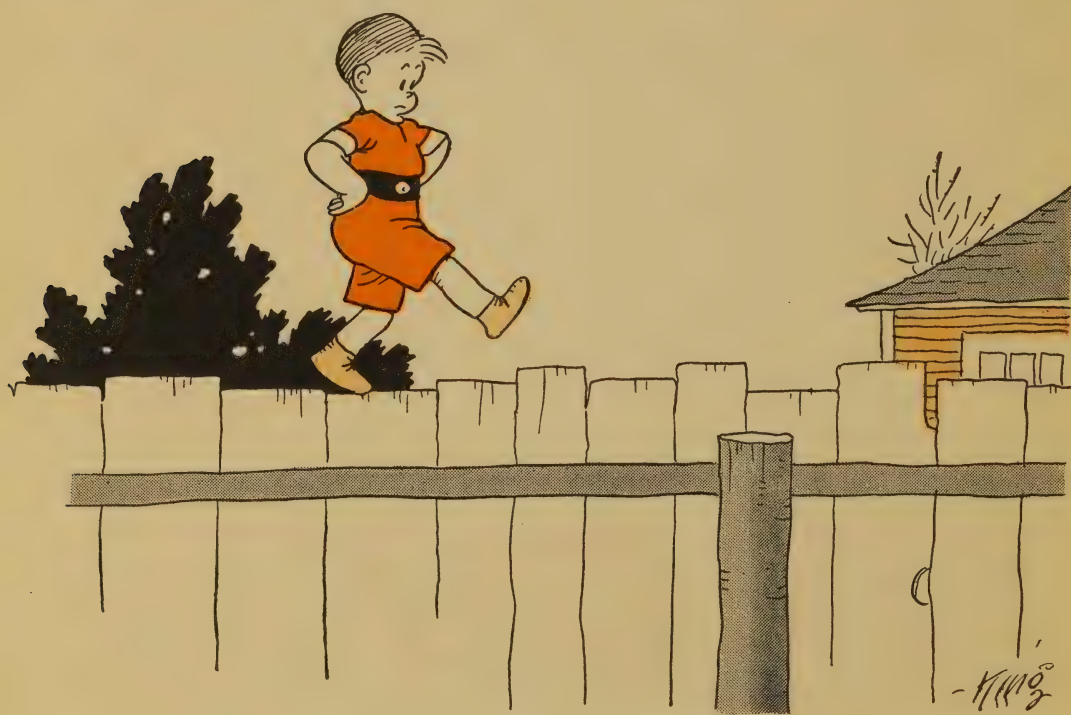
you’ve come over to live with me?”

“Ya. Read me,” said Skeezix pulling the dictionary from the shelf.

Chapter 17

“COME into the house with me, Skee-zix. I want to wash your face. It’s green.” Uncle Walt stopped to wonder why it was green and Skee-zix started to waddle back toward the alley fence.

“Skee-zix!” called Walt, but the little fellow continued to get farther away. He usually minded very well and this surprised Walt.





“You young jack rabbit, come back here!”

But instead of obeying, Skeezix hopped lightly onto the fence and began to walk along the top of it as easily as if it had been a garden path. Walt started after him and got onto the fence himself. He was rather heavy and climbing wasn't the easiest of the things he could do. He began to walk the fence

and was surprised to find how easy it was. No wonder Skeezix could do it even if he was only three years old.

But before Walt had caught up with Skeezix, that young squirrel had swung himself up onto a shed and was traveling along the ridge pole and looking at the scenery.

“Please, Skeezix,” pleaded Walt. “Come down before you break your neck.”

Skeezix paid no attention and leaped to the higher gable of a building and calmly took a piece of rope out of his pocket and proceeded to jump rope.



The perspiration stood out on Walt's forehead as he saw what was going on. He couldn't speak, he couldn't move. He had with difficulty climbed to the shed roof and there he stood frightened and still as a statue. Nothing happened, however. Skee-zix didn't miss a single step and seemed to be as much at home high in the air as he was on the ground—more so, in fact. Who had ever heard of him jumping rope before? Then he opened an umbrella Walt hadn't noticed he had and calmly stepped off the roof. Instead of being dashed to pieces below, as Walt expected to see, he floated slowly down to a clothesline which was strung from this building to a tree, and alighted on it as neatly as anyone could wish.

Then he did a lot of the things Walt had always wanted to be able to do. He ran along the wire with the umbrella to one side, and using it to help balance him, he jumped, danced and finally lay down. Throwing the umbrella away he walked on his hands and stood on his head.

Walt could not believe his own eyes. Here was his child doing all these things which he had supposed could be done only



after long training. That perhaps was not as surprising as the fact that Skeezix was not paying the slightest attention to him. This was puzzling.

“Skeezix!” Walt finally managed to call.

Skeezix looked up at him, smiled, tossed him a rose and swung the clothesline backward and forward while standing on one hand.

Walt got down from the roof—slid off perhaps, he never could tell how he did it—and rushed over to save Skeezix before he fell and broke every bone in his body. But just as he reached out for him the boy leaped to a telephone pole and showed that he was able to do something else Walt had



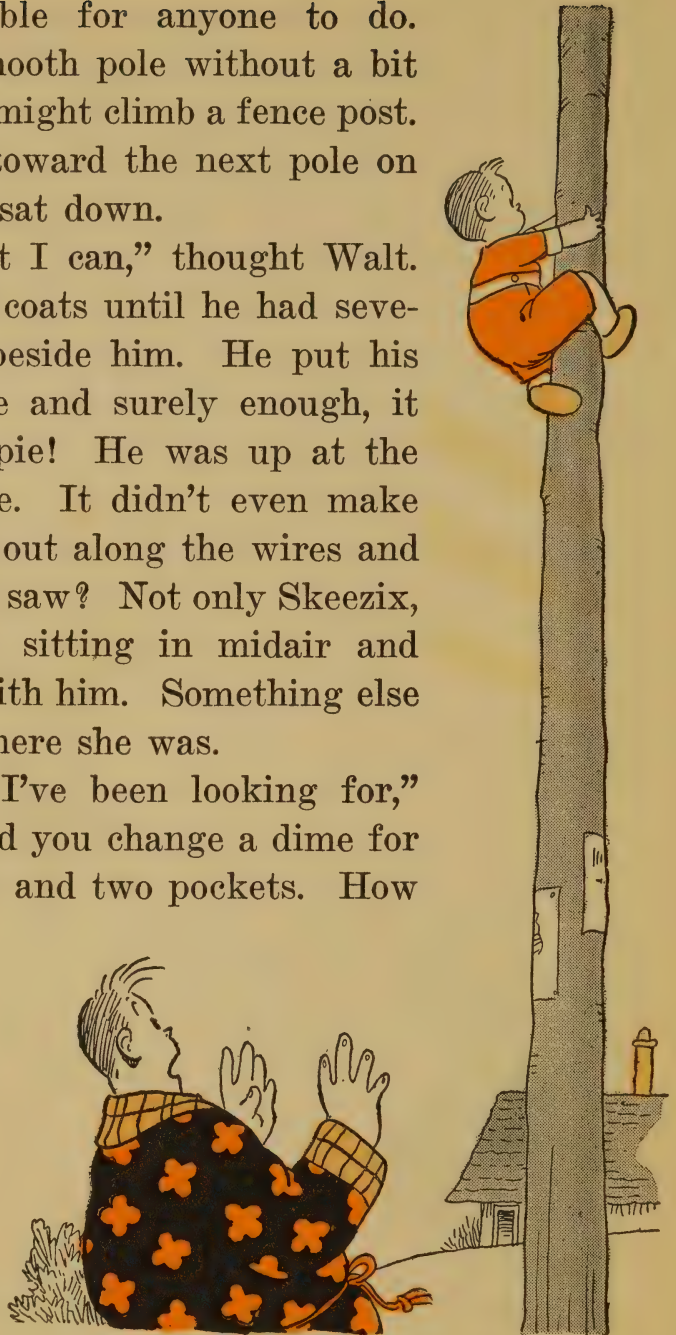
never dreamed possible for anyone to do.

He climbed the smooth pole without a bit of trouble—like Puff might climb a fence post. Then he walked out toward the next pole on one of the wires and sat down.

“If he can do that I can,” thought Walt. He began peeling off coats until he had several bushels of them beside him. He put his arms around the pole and surely enough, it was just as easy as pie! He was up at the cross arms in no time. It didn’t even make him puff. He looked out along the wires and whom do you think he saw? Not only Skee-zix, but Phyllis Blossom, sitting in midair and playing cat’s cradle with him. Something else hard to believe, but there she was.

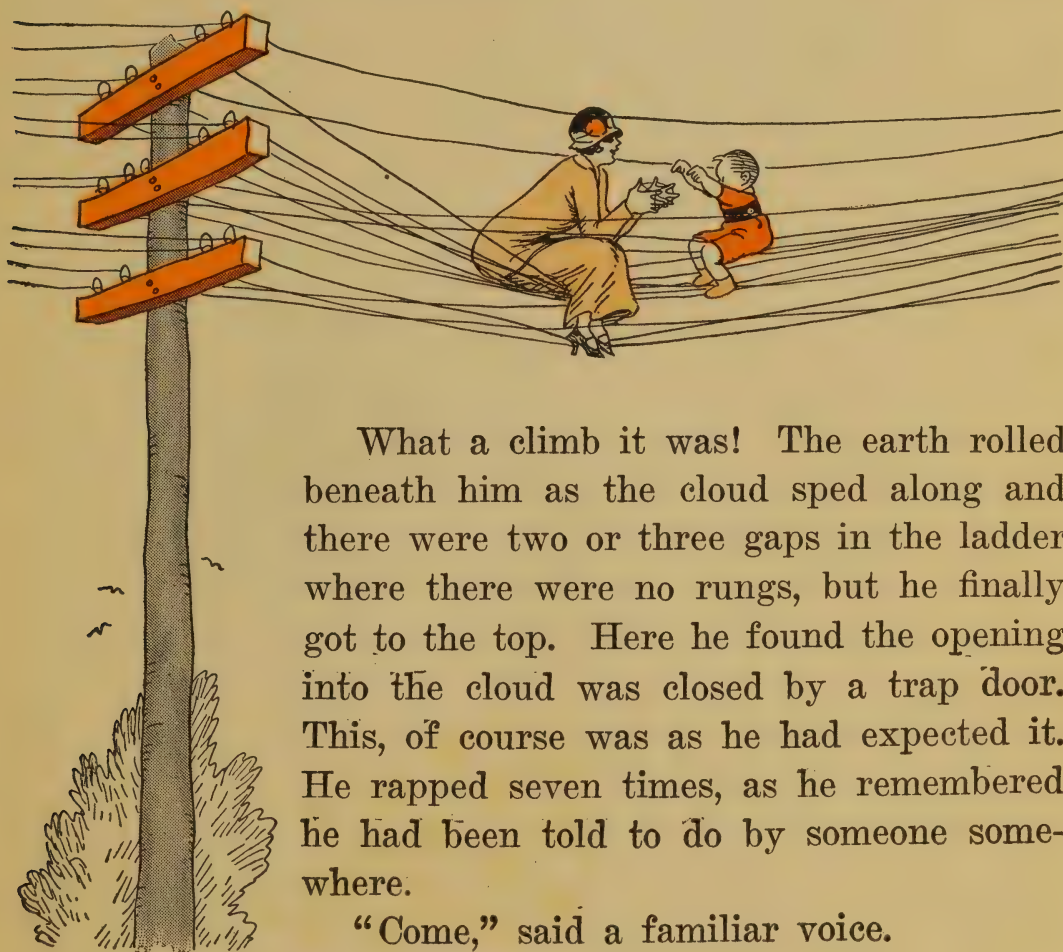
“Just the person I’ve been looking for,” she said. “Walt, could you change a dime for me? I have one dime and two pockets. How on earth am I going to get a silver dime into two pockets?”

Walt started to see if he had a couple of quarters he could give her for the dime when



he suddenly noticed that Skeezix had hopped off onto a passing cloud and was moving away.

In a second Walt knew that he had just one chance left. Hanging from the cloud was a rope ladder. It was almost out of Walt's reach but by a hop-skip-and-jump through the air he caught it, and kissing his hand to Phyllis, began to climb. He looked back again. That was strange. It was not Phyllis at all. It was Rachel.



What a climb it was! The earth rolled beneath him as the cloud sped along and there were two or three gaps in the ladder where there were no rungs, but he finally got to the top. Here he found the opening into the cloud was closed by a trap door. This, of course was as he had expected it. He rapped seven times, as he remembered he had been told to do by someone somewhere.

"Come," said a familiar voice.

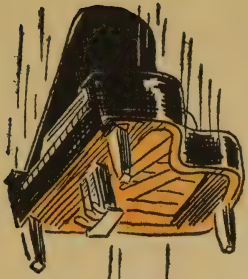
Walt pushed up the door and found himself in Doc's garage. That was sort of queer, wasn't it. But Walt didn't notice it. Doc, Avery and Bill were there — Bill under the car, Doc and Avery in it. But wait. Was it a car? Of course not. It was a grand piano.

"Where is Skeezix?" asked Walt excitedly.

"Outside peeling Easter eggs," said someone else. Walt looked over into the corner and saw that Emily and grandma were there. Emily was much thinner.

Walt stepped out of the door. He had forgotten the long climb, and instead of putting his foot on solid ground there was nothing there. Down, down, down he fell.





"It's an awful distance down," he mused. Looking up he saw the grand piano falling after him. He fell off a little to one side. So did the piano. He tried the other side. The piano was always right above him.

"I'll see my lawyer about this," and he made a note in a little book he carried.

Suddenly there was an awful jolt, a crash, an explosion. Something terrific had happened. He was afraid

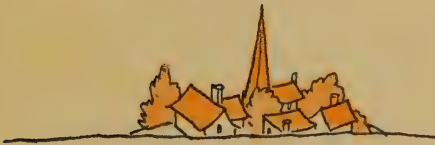
to open his eyes. It must be that he had landed on the ground and the piano had landed on him. There was an awful weight on his stomach, crushing him.

"Wake up, Unca Walt, your head's asleep."

Slowly Walt raised his eyelids and peeped out.

It was Skeezix, and he was sitting astride Uncle Walt and Uncle Walt was on his back in his own bed.

"You! Was it a dream?" Walt rubbed his eyes.



“Thank goodness you’re safe! Come here!” Skeezi was in Walt’s arms. “From now on I’m going to hang onto you so tight you’ll never, never, never get away from me as long as you live. Do you hear that?”

“Yep. Pancakes f’r brekkus,” answered Skeezi.



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